

# The Jews in Częstochowa to the First World War

## 1. The General History of the City

The city of Częstochowa played a unique role in Polish history. There were times when this city was considered the holiest religious-national relic that Congress Poland possessed. In the times of the bygone independent [Kingdom of] Poland, the name Częstochowa was always glorified, especially during the moments of the historical fight for existence as a nation. This was mostly during wars, when foreign armies stormed the fortress of Częstochowa, which was the gateway that opened up the heart of Poland - Warsaw. But, when such wars ended with a victory for the Polish Army, this "miracle" would be ascribed to the "merit" of the sacred icon of Mary, which is in the monastery of Jasna Góra, or "Klarenberg," as it was called in almost all Western European geographies and guidebooks.

But on "[regular] weekdays", once the tempest of a war had quietened and the heroism, "thanks to divine intervention" had been turned legend, adapted by Polish poets - from the mediocre as [Wespazjan Hieronim] Kochowski and [Jan Paweł] Woronicz, to such a genius as Adam Mickiewicz - the city of Częstochowa was left in the nation's shadows. It was, however, always the object of well-organised propaganda on part of the Catholic Church. In the history of Polish national thought, Częstochowa did not occupy such a place like, for instance, Kraków, Warsaw or even Lemberg [Lwów]. During the period of Russian rule, however, and especially in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the russification of the country was the prominent end-goal of the tsarist powers that be, Częstochowa became, for Russian Poland, what Kraków was for the entire Polish nation. In the great debate, which took place in Polish Socialist-Populist<sup>1</sup> circles in the 1880s and 1890s, the city of Częstochowa occupied a central position as a refuge for the nationalist reservoir of resistance. In that interesting debate which has, to this day, not been resolved, they handled the subject of how Socialism could be propagandised without debating the questions of religion.

Jan [Ludwik] Popławski, the theoretician of Socialist Populism who was strongly influenced by the Russian "Narodniks", developed a theory that, precisely in Poland, a Socialist could not be indifferent to Catholicism - despite the fact that the official leadership of the Catholic Church sinned heavily as regards Polish national aspirations - but just the opposite. "A Polish Socialist", he wrote, "first of all, needs to feel solidarity and a union with Catholicism, because in the political conditions, in which the Polish People is now living, Catholicism is truly a national faith. In the Polish People itself, this faith has helped conserve the pure national traditions and customs. For the language and also the patriotism, Poland has much to thank the Catholic Church for".

"A shrine such as Częstochowa", Popławski wrote in his weekly *Głos* (1890 and 1891), "is not just some corner of the Catholic faith, but the heart of Polish national confidence whose foundation, for the time being, is this faith".

In a polemic with Aleksander Świętochowski, the main spokesperson of the rationalistic school of [Polish] Positivism, which fought against clericalism but not against religion, Popławski urged the Polish intelligentsia to show their Polishness by making a pilgrimage to Częstochowa, together with

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: From the subsequent mention of Jan (Ludwik) Popławski, as the ideologue Socialist Populism, we may determine that this was a nationalist party which at first sided with Socialism - it later became the ND Party, or the "Endecja."]

the Polish peasantry. "In such processions", he wrote, "the maximum amount of Polishness lies, which the political conditions allow to be revealed".

"Polish intellectual", Popławski wrote, "put on a grey *Sukmana*<sup>2</sup>-like the Mazowiecki peasant and go with him on foot to Jasna Góra's holy relic. Sleep together with him on the stones of the roads. Inhale the heavy sweat of the peasant's limbs. Sing with him the old litanies to the Holy Mary of Częstochowa, those same litanies which contain a treasure-trove of the old Polish language and profound Polish faith - and you will feel that you are living the only little bit of Polish life which History has allowed us to still enjoy and that foreign powers have not yet taken away."

The impression Popławski's articles made was very great. In Congress Poland, radical penitent-sinner types appeared who called for participation in the processions of the masses of Polish peasantry to Częstochowa, and even strove to arrange such excursions for the intelligentsia and factory workers.

Even within Poland's socialist circles - which stood upon the Marxist ground - by keeping silent and not arguing against this "Częstochowa orientation", it was almost as if they were morally sanctioning it. Apropos this point, it is worth drawing attention to the little known fact that the famed Polish socialist writer, Stanisław [Leopold] Brzozowski, published an article in which he professed his solidarity with the "Częstochowa orientation".

In the London *Przedświt* [Dawn], the theoretical organ of the Polish Socialist Party, they wrote that the fact, that the will of the Polish People could only be legally manifested in the processions to Częstochowa, should not be kept silent - let alone ignored. This article was written by none other than the Jew Feliks Perl.

In [the writer] Władysław Reymont's famed coverage of a religious procession to Częstochowa, in which he participated alongside an array of prominent Polish writers and journalists - this national-religious aspect of Częstochowa's role was expressed most distinctly.

The momentous events of 1859, when thanks to the "liberal" course in Russia, [the Poles] managed to receive permission to erect a memorial monument to the priest Kordecki, the heroic defender of Jasna Góra against the Swedes in 1655. This constituted the beginning of a revived national cult for Częstochowa's "holiness". In the uprising of 1866, people made pilgrimages there in order to pray for the "aid and protection of those going to die in Her name". Anthologies of poems on Częstochowa appear. In 1859, Karol Kucz, the editor of *Kurier Warszawski* [The Warsaw Courier] at the time, published an interesting reportage of his visit in Częstochowa. In 1860, a detailed guidebook appeared which was written by the renowned Śląsk people's activist Józef [Piotr] Lompa. In 1862, during the "moral revolution," a book was published in Warsaw entitled "*Częstochowa in Polish Poetry*", which even contains two poems by Jewish writers - both of them disciples of the Rabbinical School<sup>3</sup> (Kon and Landau).

The infamous [Damazy] Macoch<sup>4</sup> murder trial (1910), which exposed the depravity of the "brothers" [viz. friars] in Jasna Góra, caused terrible disappointment in Polish society. People even saw, in this murder trial, a "provocation" on the part of the Russian authorities, in order to "compromise Poland's most hallowed possession".

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<sup>2</sup> [TN: Traditional men's outer garment made of homespun cloth, long to the ankles or knees, once worn by peasants in Poland.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: Ref. to the "rabbinical" seminaries which the Jewish Enlightenment Movement (Haskala) set up throughout Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: See here: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damazy\\_Macoch](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damazy_Macoch), according to which the said Macoch was a Pauline monk, who murdered his cousin Władysław Macoch in connection with a clandestine love affair with an axe in a monk's cell, whereupon he dumped the body into the sewer by the Warta River. Over the course of the investigation by the Russian authorities, he also confessed to having robbed treasures from the abbey and this was, apparently, a systematic endeavour in which he engaged with two fellow clerics.]

Apropos this detail, the proclamation by Polish writers, signed by Sienkiewicz, Reymont and even Maria Konopnicka, is of interest. It attempted to disconnect this sorrowful fact in the life of the monastery and called to “glorify that which is sacred, which the hand of a murderer cannot tarnish”.

Following these general observations, let us now present a brief overview of Częstochowa’s history.

The meaning of the name “Częstochowa” has brought out so many fantastic and curious interpretations that, to this day, we do not factually know the etymology of this word. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, one of the weavers of rhymes, who wrote an “epic” of twelve poems about the defence of Jasna Góra, interpreted the word as deriving from the fact that “the Holy Mother often hides the victims from evil” (*często* [often] *chowa* [hides]). The city arose from a village named Częstochówka. Thanks to a monastery that was built next to it, in all likelihood at the start of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, on a hill which was given the name “Jasna Góra” (Bright Mountain), this village gradually developed into a city. History tells us that, in 1377, Duke Władysław [II] of Opole conquered the castle of Bełz. There, he found an icon of the “Holy Mother” which, according to legend, had been painted by Luke the Apostle, the patron saint of painters in the Catholic Church. Duke Władysław brought this same icon with him to the wooden church on Jasna Góra, behind the village of Częstochówka, and left it as a gift. This means that the church itself is much older and, according to some clerical documents in Poland, goes back to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Duke brought the Pauline Order down from Hungary, to whom he bequeathed two villages - Częstochowa and Kawodrza. The proceeds from these two villages were to serve the purpose of eventually building a walled church and a monastery.

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1382, the King of Poland granted a privilege [viz. city rights] to the monastery. Thus this institution came into existence which, over time, caused the locality’s growth and expansion, with a religious prestige not only in Poland, but also in the broader Catholic world.

The Pauline [monks] set about creating a library and an archive. Despite the frequent wars and natural catastrophes, this library was hardly damaged and contained a large quantity of manuscripts, incunabula<sup>5</sup>, precious objects and important documents. Among these rare books are also many in Hebrew which, before the last World War, were the subject of an array of bibliographical examinations but which, sadly, were never completed and, hence, were never published (Bałaban and Hirsberg).

Over the course of time, the Częstochowa monastery became so famous throughout Poland that people travelled there not only to pray, but also to do a little looting. The gifts to the church increased and fantastic rumours spread of the treasures of gold that were to be found there. In 1430, a band of Polish noblemen attacked the monastery and carried off some of the valuables, including the “sacred icon”.

According to the legend written in the monastery’s unprinted chronicles, when the robbers took out the icon, “the picture began to weep”. The robbers were startled and, whether in rage or in fear, they began cutting the picture with a sword, and [then] fled, leaving the icon behind, not far from Jasna Góra. King Władysław Jagiełło ordered that the icon be brought to Kraków, where there was an order of monks [called] “The Brotherhood of St Luke”, who dedicated themselves exclusively to painting “sacred” pictures. They restored the icon and, with great ceremony, returned it to Częstochowa. Incidentally, this procession of barefoot pilgrims was the first large Catholic demonstration that was not of a local character. Those who had cut the picture, as well as those who had robbed the treasures, were captured and sentenced to death.

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<sup>5</sup> [TN: Texts printed in Europe before the 16<sup>th</sup> century.]

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery and its environs were not distinguished in any manner. The “brotherly” Pauline [monks] sat *al ha'Toyre ve'al ha'avoyde*<sup>6</sup>, meaning that they studied theology and worked – with the aid of the slaves-peasants – the [land of the] two villages which they had received as a gift. Compared to other monasteries in Poland - such as Tyniec, for example - Jasna Góra did not produce any great scholars in the realm of Catholic theology. Aleksander Brückner, the great authority on religious literature in Old Poland, maintains that the monastery in Częstochowa did not distinguish itself much as an institution of learning, although the collection of old manuscripts and books always had a great cultural-historical value.

Only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century did Częstochowa become famous throughout Poland, although the city never reached the notoriety of a French Lourdes. This was due to the fact that, whilst Lourdes became the centre of Catholicism in Europe, and owed its prestige to the supposed miracles of the healing of all manner of cripples, Częstochowa attained renown due to its strategic position, which gave the kingdom the idea to turn the city into a fortress. The very fact that the sacred icon was in this city, was what actually led to this historical decision.

In this instance, two probabilities were taken into consideration. It was reckoned that such a fortress of the “Holy Mother” would strengthen the willingness of the military garrison to risk their lives [in battle], feeling that, together with [defending] Poland, they were also defending the symbol and the figure on that icon. On the other hand, the monastery itself would rise in importance, thanks to the fact that it was surrounded by a fortress with an entire array of garrisons of hired soldiers, who would ascribe every victory, not so much to their own heroism, as to the workings of the “Holy Mother”. In this detail, there was more at play here than purely strategic reasons – [as] although from that standpoint there were, at the time in Poland, numerous more favourable locations for a fortress, the intention was to create a union between the supernatural protection and the physical resistance. This is very distinctly conveyed by an array of travellers, particularly engineers, who were invited from abroad by the King of Poland Zygmunt III and, later, by his son Władysław IV. This was during that cruel period which Sienkiewicz described in his famous trilogy. Foreign armies entered Poland from all sides. First there was the prelude - the Cossack Uprising and Chmielnicki's revolt against Poland. Then there was the war with the Swedes. It was precisely then that Częstochowa was turned into a fortress, which encircled the monastery like a strong ring.

In 1655, the Swedish legions stood at the gates of the Częstochowa fortress. This fortress was to be put to its first military test. The Swedish Army consisted of 14,000 soldiers, armed with 19 large cannons. The Częstochowa fortress only had 160 soldiers and 70 monks. At the head of these monks stood [the Abbot,] Augustyn Kordecki.

The siege of Częstochowa lasted from 18<sup>th</sup> November to 25<sup>th</sup> December 1655. The Swedes were unable to take the fortress and were forced to retreat. This was immediately declared an open “miracle” and it greatly helped to raise Częstochowa's prestige, both as a fortress and, even more as a “Hallowed Sanctuary”.

In his long “epic” of several thousand lines, one Walenty Odymalski sang the praises of this “miraculous defence”, setting a model for works of this type, whose number over time grew to over twenty.

The siege of 1655 and Kordecki's heroic feat fulfilled to perfection the function that this city, thanks to the fortress and the holy image inside the monastery, had taken upon itself. The fortress had

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<sup>6</sup> [TN: “At the (study of) the Torah and the work (viz. service of God)”; a Hebrew expression used in Yiddish to describe one who dedicates himself solely to study and prayer. In this instance, the author uses the literal meaning of “ha'avoyde” (the work) to mean the forced labour of others.]

symbolised the physical resistance, which could prevail over a much larger enemy - only because the “sacred icon”, the symbol of “moral power”, protects the weak defenders.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Częstochowa, once again, became famous as a fortress, which served as the gateway to Warsaw, the capital city. Such was the case in 1702 and 1705, when the Swedes, once again, launched an attack on Poland.

At the time of the Bar Confederation, which fought to maintain the privileges of the nobility, and was the first anti-Russian movement in Poland, from 1769 Częstochowa was in the hands of the supporters of this movement.

Over the space of a fortnight, the Russian Army besieged the fortress – which, this time, was forced to surrender. This happened in the days from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> January 1771.

In 1793, the Prussians conquered Częstochowa. Although Jasna Góra defended itself against the Prussians well, on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1793, the few Polish soldiers were forced to capitulate. Prussia regarded Częstochowa as a very important strategic point. In a letter to the Prussian military commander [von] Möllendorf, the King wrote that both banks of the Warta needed to be occupied, as this constituted good flanking support for Schlesien [Śląsk].

On the same day upon which Częstochowa surrendered, the Prussian Justice Minister, Dankelman, visited Klarenberg, viz. Jasna Góra.

In Częstochowa, on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1793, the King of Prussia’s birthday was celebrated with such imposed pomp, as had never been celebrated even for a Polish monarch.

In the *Vossische Zeitung* dated 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1793, a detailed account of this celebration appears, which is worth presenting here in Yiddish:

*Yesterday, here in Częstochowa, the birthday of our gracious monarch was celebrated with [a] great parade. His Excellency General Field Marshal von Möllendorf, Commander-in-Chief of Southern Prussia, brought glad tidings. Poland will not be given the sacred icon of Mary, which is in the Klarenberg Monastery<sup>7</sup>. This calmed the spirits of the local populace here and, as a result, the inhabitants participated in the holiday, giving thanks and wishing that the dear life of the Father of Our Land should be preserved. This joyous and unforgettable day was celebrated in the following order:*

*In the morning, the Pauline [monks] held a mass at which an orchestra played. From the walls of the fortress, three salvos of cannon were fired. At lunchtime, General von Pölitz, the garrison’s brigadier, who is staying in the vicinity, gave a festive banquet. Many royal figures, with their wives, were invited. At this luncheon, they drank to the health of the King and the Royal Court. Music played and cannons were fired. At night, there were fireworks. This happy day was completed with a ball, which lasted to the light of day. Merriment and pleasure reigned at the ball.*

The Prussians evidently considered the city of Częstochowa as the crown of their new territorial conquests as, in his journey across these territories, the King of Prussia stopped for three days (28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> October 1793) in Częstochowa and took great interest in the national-religious position that this city occupies in Polish history.

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<sup>7</sup> [TN: Meaning that the icon would remain in situ.]

Częstochowa became part of Southern Prussia, and was named the seat of a county with 153 localities. The first district administrator was a germanised Pole [named] von Puttkamer.

On 18<sup>th</sup> November 1806, the Polish Army of the Duchy of Warsaw took back the Częstochowa fortress from the Prussians. Three years later (1809), this same fortress defended itself against the Austrians. In 1813, the Russians stormed Częstochowa. In that [same] year, the fortress was, in fact, completely liquidated. It had been proven to be too antiquated and was thus of no military value. But, in parallel with the growth of the importance of Jasna Góra and later also of the fortress that had once surrounded it, the city of Częstochowa itself also developed. Its importance was a direct result of the privileges that the Polish monarchs had given it. As early as 1502, King Aleksander [Jagiello] grants Częstochowa a municipal charter - the so-called "Magdeburg rights". The city is made free from the rights and jurisdiction of the noblemen. At the *Sejm* in Warsaw, [*jure uxoris*] King Stefan Batory affirms the privileges of the Częstochowa *mieszczanie* [burghers]. Due to its favourable geographical position, important political and diplomatic meetings are held in Częstochowa. Thus, for instance, in 1616, King Zygmunt III of Poland held a meeting in Częstochowa with Karl<sup>8</sup>, Prince[-Bishop] of Wrocław, at which they discussed military assistance to Kaiser Ferdinand II of Austria against the Czechs and Hungarians.

In 1657, King Jan Kazimierz summoned a *senat* to Częstochowa and, at his bidding, they decided upon a general military mobilisation of the nobility. This happened two years after the "miraculous" defence of the city against the Swedes. In this manner, Częstochowa gained a reputation as a centre for political and, by implication, military undertakings. That Częstochowa played an important role in the political life of the kingdom is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1661, that same king once more summoned the *senat* there. This time, they discussed the matter of appointing an heir to the throne while the King was still alive, which was something new. The fact that the members of the *senat* agreed to this, although it was completely up to them to approve the location for such a conference, confirms that Częstochowa was considered an important political centre. A royal wedding even took place in this city. This was in 1670. In the monastery on Jasna Góra, King Michał [Korybut] Wiśniowiecki married Princess Eleonora of Austria.

On this occasion, Częstochowa saw an assemblage of high-ranking court officials and nobility from Poland, Austria, France and other countries. This event was even important enough to be "sung" about by an entire array of court poets who, once again, placed the city at the centre of Europe's political happenings.

It could be said that, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Częstochowa had such a reputation, that were one to have judged the city by the number of occasional writings, poems composed, travellers' descriptions or news in the papers, one would have thought that it was a large city. In reality, Częstochowa was a small town. Only at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did the city have a population which, for those times, was relatively large. In 1808, Częstochowa had a population of 3,349 souls. In 1826, New Częstochowa was united with Old Częstochowa and one city was created. This almost doubled the number of residents. In 1827, the city had a population of 6,168, in 1859 - 8,637, and, one year later, 9,343. In 1826, the government of Congress Poland brought craftsmen from Germany and encouraged foreign investors to settle in the city and to develop the commerce and industry.

Częstochowa played an important role in the uprising of 1831. The purchase of armaments in Wrocław and Königsberg [Królewiec; Kaliningrad] caused the city to become a delivery point. The fervent patriotic atmosphere of that generation of Częstochowa *mieszczanie* [inhabitants], the

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<sup>8</sup> [TN: Charles of Austria.]

majority of German origin, best illustrates the rapid Polonisation of the second and even the first generation of the non-Poles.

The same was seen during the uprising of 1863. Many Polish leaders of the revolt came from Częstochowa. The role of Częstochowa in Poland's national upsurge was expressed in Polish patriotic poetry - in the hymns to the Częstochowa "Mother" which was sung by the rebels.

Following the uprising, when the Positivist philosophy, which was the credo of the young Polish capitalism, pervaded the literature and press, Polish social intercourse in Częstochowa also began to be governed by it, although the anti-Positivist forces in Częstochowa, thanks to the direct influence of the Church, were comparatively stronger than in other Polish cities.

In 1874 the tsarist government built a Russian Orthodox church as a symbol of Russian sovereignty. The anti-Russian protest, at the festive inauguration of this church, was the first Polish demonstration in Częstochowa since 1863. Its consequences were the first political trial in this city.

Meanwhile, Częstochowa grew and became highly industrialised. In 1877, the city had many factories in which paper, wallpaper, soap, candles, *cykorია*<sup>9</sup> [etc.] were produced. Later, factories of lime, bricks, [etc.] came. Częstochowa reached the peak of its industrial drive in the years 1880-1900. During this period, iron foundries, textiles and the steel industry arrived. Around this industry, as one may imagine, commerce developed. Thanks to the proximity of Prussia, import-export trade expanded vigorously. As a transit city, Częstochowa began to play a weighty role in the economic life of the entire country.

In 1897, Częstochowa already numbered 43,863 souls or about five times more than forty years earlier.

With the development of Częstochowa's industry came the rapid growth of the working class. Częstochowa's first Socialist circles were founded by the supporters of Patriotic Socialism. Only later did the Social-Democrats come, but they had no great influence in Częstochowa. For a certain period, a circle of Socialists-Revolutionaries operated there, due to the fact that, in the city's military garrison, there were members of that party. This may be seen from the trial of a group of Russian soldiers in Częstochowa, which took place in February 1906.

The Polish middle class was distant from any liberal or generally progressive ideas. The National-Democratic Party [*Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Narodowe* (SDN)] held a strong political position amongst Częstochowa's Polish bourgeoisie. Influenced by Catholic clericalism, the Polish *petit bourgeois* of Częstochowa was very conservative and, thus, inevitably antisemitic. The few progressive Poles felt very isolated and conducted a fierce struggle for cultural, humanistic activity in the city. This may be seen from the letters of Częstochowa physician Dr Władysław Biegański who, through his works on medicine and philosophy, earned himself an important name outside Poland's borders.

The Polish Socialist Party [PPS] was strong in Częstochowa. When the split between the Right and Left *pepesowcy* [PPS members] occurred, specifically in Częstochowa, the Right - who took the name "Revolutionary Faction of the PPS" - came out on top. This was very evident in the famous trial of 82 members of this party, which took place in January 1914. It is also worth mentioning that, among those most active in this same party, who were judged at that trial, were Jews, such as the lawyer Gliksman and his daughter the writer Maria Gliksman, Zaks and others.

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<sup>9</sup> [TN: Name of a beverage made of chicory and coconut, which was invented as a substitute for coffee which was very expensive in Eastern Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and which quickly gained immense popularity.]

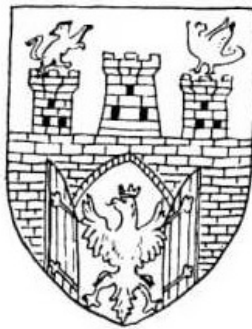
When the First World War broke out, Częstochowa was occupied by the Germans on the third day. This was on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914, the Germans shot a few of the city's residents. They began dragging people off to work.

Częstochowa was under German occupation, but the Jasna Góra was under Austrian occupation. Austria, being a "Catholic monarchy", was better suited to act as custodian of the "sacred icon", than was Germany.

With the rise of independent Poland, the city's population greatly expanded. The city became part of the *województwo* [province] of Kielce. In 1921, Częstochowa had a population of 80,473 and, in 1939, 130,000. Częstochowa had a progressive City Council made up of 42 councillors, of whom some 12-14 were Jewish.

In parallel with the city's economic growth in the years 1917-1939, the general culture also grew. In 1917, the Dr Władysław Biegański Public Library was founded. By 1938, this library had 60,000 books. Its foundation was Dr Biegański's private library. The scholastic network also spread out extensively. New primary schools arose, as well as an array of state and private *gimnazja*. There were even plans to open an institute of higher education.

Emblem of  
Częstochowa



The city's coat of arms

The city had an array of artistic organisations, sports clubs, social unions and even publishing houses.

The professional intelligentsia was of a high calibre. The engineers mostly studied abroad. The doctors had a good reputation in the profession. The Częstochowa branch of the Polish Medical Institute [?] conducted independent, scientific work. Częstochowa, by the number of its inhabitants, was the seventh largest city in Poland - even though in Polish life it occupied a much more important position. On the eve of the Second World War, Częstochowa held a prominent place in the country's financial activity. In 1938, the city sold 2,042 industrial patents, of which 315 were to large factories and 3,125 patents for trade, of which 243 were to large firms.

The city had 6,100 buildings, 86% of which were brick-walled. 75% of all houses had modern installations, such as electricity, gas and running water.

Częstochowa was a modern city striding onwards with a sure step, until the bloody Second World War brought its young, impetuous march forward to a halt.

## 2. History of the Jews in Częstochowa

It is very difficult to determine when Jews actually settled in Częstochowa. The first mention of a Jewish presence regarding the city is bound with the Frankist Movement. When Jakub Frank (1726-1791) was sentenced, in 1760, by the Church's tribunal on a charge of "heresy", he was sent to Częstochowa. He sat there, in the fortress, for thirteen whole years, until the Russian General [Aleksander] Bibikov, who captured the fortress, set him free. These thirteen years were actually a continuation of Frank's previous adventurous life. He surrounded himself with a great retinue, lived in grand style, [and] even brought over his wife who, in fact, died in Częstochowa. Some of his followers came there and settled within the city of Częstochowa itself. Over time, however, this



crowd travelled away. There is great doubt as to whether even one Frankist family remained in Częstochowa.

It is not impossible that Jews lived in Częstochowa as far back as the reign of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski, who reigned between 1764 and 1794. Regarding this period, there is a record that the king allowed a certain Polish nobleman to take seven Jewish families into one of his buildings. This privilege was, at the time, called "*juridica*". But this record is already a little dubious, because a nobleman having such a "*juridica*" did not need to ask the king for any special permits, being as the definition of "*juridica*" was that the said nobleman had "extraterritoriality" over his piece of land.

Yet it could very well be that, in this instance, two separate facts became intertwined. Perhaps a Polish nobleman housed seven Jewish families in one of his buildings because these Jews paid him the amount for which he asked. Apart from that, the king most probably authorised seven [other] Jewish families to settle in Częstochowa. Who they were and where they lived – that we do not know.

Nevertheless, one thing is beyond doubt [and that is, that] in the second half of the 18th century, Jews already lived in Częstochowa. At the time, there was already a Jewish community in [nearby] Janów, where the Częstochowa Jews were brought to a Jewish grave. In this manner, Częstochowa was a "*przykahatek*" [small subordinate *kehilla*] to Janów. The Janów *Kehilla* led a long struggle for its hegemony and would not allow Częstochowa to become an independent *kehilla*.

As to the number of Jewish families, we also know nothing. It must not have been small because, in the years 1787-1797 a Jewish doctor was practising there - one Reb Hersz.

The earliest concrete reports about the local Jews originate from the times of the Prussian occupation, when Częstochowa was annexed to the administrative department of South Prussia, which was established after the second partition of Poland [in 1793]. In a report sent to the King of Prussia by a designated officer, whose task it was to inform on the newly-conquered provinces, it is reported that "next to Częstochowa, there are few Jewish peasants to be found". This is doubtlessly an important and even unique fact. Since this a fact set out in writing by a Prussian officer who visited the country, there is no basis for not believing his account.

The fact that there were Jewish farmers at the start of Jewish settlement in Częstochowa is indeed very interesting. But from where did they arrive there? If they were already there - as in the Prussian officer's testimony - then it is clear that they were there even before the partition of Poland. It could only be that the privilege that the last Polish king granted to the seven Jewish families was only on condition that they would cultivate the soil. As several similar cases with Jews in those times in different parts of Poland are known, it stands to reason that these [seven families] were indeed those Jews who were working the land. The fact that, besides these, there was also a Jewish congregation in Częstochowa, which huddled in the filthy little wooden houses of a nobleman who had a *juridica*, and who drew a huge income from these Jews for protecting them, is proven by the following fact:

According to a decree dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 1797, the Prussians permitted the Jews to leave the filthy quarters they inhabited and to pick better dwellings for themselves. Unfortunately, that same Prussian officer who, with respect to many other cities and towns actually gave the number of their Jewish and non-Jewish residents, precisely with Częstochowa, he was very scant with regards to details.

As consequence, we lack the important fact regarding the number of Jews who were, in those times, living in Częstochowa in a ghetto that was so dirty, that the “goodhearted” Prussians allowed them to move out to a better ghetto.

We find another type of Jew who settled in the Częstochowa area at the time. The Prussian government considered all Jews, who were unable to prove a reliable income, as “beggar Jews” and banished them from Prussia. Many of these “beggar Jews”, out of despair and hunger, began rambling aimlessly about the country’s forests and fields. Together with nobles who had lost their property, *mieszczanie*, peasants and even gypsies, they organised themselves into camps of bandits and plundered all throughout the country. There are tales of such a group of bandits - many of whom were Jews - which operated around Częstochowa.

Unfortunately, there is no information about the Jews’ personal lives during the Prussian reign. In 1806, the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, founded by Napoleon from the ruins of Prussian part of Poland, conquered the Częstochowa fortress. The nascent government started collecting data on the Jewish population, in order to prepare the necessary projects for the reforms planned. From these same reports, we find that 3,349 people then lived in Częstochowa and, among them, were 495 Jews. This means that, in 1808, the Jews constituted 14.8% of the whole population. In all the cities and towns in the Częstochowa region there were 6,963 inhabitants, of whom 1,310 were Jews. This means that around a third of all the Jews in the district lived in Częstochowa itself. Hence, the Jewish congregation in Częstochowa was the largest of the district’s communities. While the percentage of Jews in the entire district was 18% of all city-dwellers, in the rural settlements their numbers were much smaller. On average, they only made up 2% of the rural population.

There is no doubt that, even during the Prussian reign, there was already some form of *kehilla* organisation in Częstochowa. Otherwise, it is unclear how one we find even a rudimentary form of a *kehilla* administration that we find there at the time of the Duchy of Warsaw’s rule. Under the Prussians, fiscal policy regarding the Jews created the need to organise a Jewish *kehilla* to take responsibility for the payment of the taxes imposed upon the Jews. In many cities, including Warsaw, the Prussians were actually the first to authorise a Jewish *kehilla*. The same also happened in Częstochowa. There must have been a Jewish *kehilla* with representatives, as was the custom everywhere else. Having no documentation from the days of the Prussian rule as regards authorising the Jews to have a Jewish *kehilla*, it is clear that the *kehilla* leadership that was active at the time of the Polish Duchy had already existed earlier under the Prussians.



**The regimental flag of the remnants of the Polish Army, which returned from Napoleon's Russian campaign in 1813. Later, it served as a curtain for the ark in the New Synagogue in Częstochowa**

The first action taken by the Częstochowa *kehilla*, during the reign of the Duchy of Warsaw, was to open a permanent synagogue for prayer. The second very important action was to elect a spiritual leader to stand at the head of the *kehilla*.

On 8<sup>th</sup> Av 5668 ([1<sup>st</sup> August] 1808), a *kehilla* meeting was held in Częstochowa. This was surely not the first meeting in the more than two years that the city had been under the new government. The character of the meeting attests to it being a regular meeting of a long-standing management committee that acted for benefit of the Jewish congregation. At that meeting, one Reb Jakow ben Eliezer Lewi, was elected as head of the rabbinical court and as the representative of the *kehilla*. Officially, this same Jakow ben Eliezer Lewi signed as “*wierni kahału Częstochowskiego*” (Trustee of the Częstochowa *kehilla*).

Of the origins of this first representative of the *kehilla* in

Częstochowa, whose name has come down to us, we know next to nothing. We only know that he was a scholarly Jew, a good organiser and, apparently, also a wealthy man. The latter may be deduced from the fact that he was also *gizber* (treasurer) of the *kehilla* - a position which was usually not entrusted to any poor people.

He needed to be consulted in matters pertaining to the *kehilla*. It is very interesting that, when this Jakow Lewi signed a declaration of loyalty and uprightness in carrying out his duties, there was also a clause stating that he, Lewi, "will work for the benefit of the city, even if this should bring harm to another *kehilla*".

The "other *kehilla*" was most surely Janów, which viewed Częstochowa's aspirations for "emancipation" askew and strived, with all its might, that this city not be separated from Janów. The city itself, apparently, anticipated more benefit from an independent *kehilla* than from being annexed to Janów and the Częstochowa burghers therefore supported the young Jewish *kehilla*'s ambitions of autonomy.

The *kehilla* had three *parnosim* [community elders], who officiated according to a rotational system, viz. each month a different one. For that reason, such an individual was referred to as "*parnes chodesh*" [monthly delegate]. The treasurer did not have the right to pay out any moneys by himself without a note from the *parnosim*.

The monthly delegate was allowed, on his own account, to issue a payment order of up to six gulden. Payments exceeding this sum were made only with the signatures of all three delegates.

The Chief of [Rabbinical] Court worked for wages, even when he himself did not want them. His salary was set at 6 *Reichsthaler* a month and, in the months of Nisan and Tishrei [which are the months of the holidays], his pay was doubled to 12 *Reichsthaler*. In addition to his wages, he also received an apartment [to live in], free of charge.

He also received three percent of the receipts from the nearby settlements. At the said meeting, it was also decided that, as long as Częstochowa did not have its own rabbi, the Chief of Court was to receive also half of the *rachash*<sup>10</sup>.



***A group of children in Mrs Wajzer's school [late 1800's or early 1900's; of no direct bearing on this article.]***

Once a year, the Chief of Court was also allowed to go out to the villages surrounding Częstochowa and receive *Hanukkah-gelt*.

This document was signed not only by Reb Jakow Lewi, but also by forty prominent Częstochowa citizens. This is the oldest surviving document in the Częstochowa *kehilla* ledger. From it, it can be concluded that the wages for the Chief of Court were not set for Reb Jakow Lewi who, in all probability did not need, them [at all]- but as a matter of principle for the future, when another would occupy this position. Another important fact is that, in the Częstochowa region, there were [other

Jewish] communities which were administratively attached to it. The best sign of this is that moneys would come in from these communities and the Chief of Court had the right to receive three percent of these proceeds. This can be interpreted to mean that Częstochowa was, by then, already the main *kehilla* in the region. Precisely during the era of the Duchy of Warsaw, this organisation, according to

<sup>10</sup> [TN: Acronym of (payment to the) **R**abbi, **Ch**azan (cantor) and **Sh**ames (sacristan).]

administrative counties or districts, worked very actively. Testimony to this is the meetings of *kehillas* during that period, that attempted to join forces in order to annul an array of harsh fiscal decrees.

This tendency of Częstochowa towards independence was not very much to the liking of the Janów *kehilla*. They wished to disrupt it because, otherwise, they themselves would lose all the little surrounding communities, which were very quickly within the sphere of influence of the young, impetuous, Częstochowa *kehilla*.

The first conflict between the communities of Janów and Częstochowa manifested itself in the most distinct manner precisely in that same year, 1808, when it occurred to Luszczewski, the Minister of Finances of the small and limited Duchy of Warsaw, that it was possible to squeeze great quantities of money from the Jews through various acute taxes. Together with Minister of Education Grabowski, he led a campaign against Jewish "fanaticism", the main source of which was the Jewish book.

The easiest thing would have been to simply confiscate Jewish books. But then such a decree would not bring in any revenue. It was decided to impose a tax on those Jews wishing to keep their Jewish books. This meant that anyone in possession of books was required to allow them to be stamped and, obviously, pay for it. True, this would not uproot "fanaticism", but it laid a financial burden upon those Jews wishing to remain "fanatics", requiring them to pay for this "pleasure". The viewpoint was that many Jews would rather hand in their books than pay the stamp tax, thus diminishing the number of "fanatics". That was the reasoning of the Minister of Education, Stanisław Grabowski.

When a circular reached the Częstochowa *kehilla*, to the effect that it was to announce to its Jews the law of stamping the books, it immediately sent out a circular in Yiddish to all the neighbouring settlements. These were Działoszyn, Krzepice, Mstów, Cynków, Kuźnica, Kłobuck, Łobodno, Miedzno and others.

Hitherto, this had been explicitly the territory of the Janów *kehilla*. By including these communities and sending out emissaries who stamped the books on the spot in name of the *kehilla* in Częstochowa, giving receipts, calculating the precise sums and so on, Janów lost its rights to these points and Częstochowa entrenched itself there as the "legal guardian" of these communities.

The proclamation, itself, is of such great cultural and historical value, that we are reprinting it here. For the reader to get a sense of the language and orthography of those days, this announcement is reproduced without the slightest alterations.

*To the leaders of the congregation of Israel in the towns and villages in the powiat [county] of here, Częstochowa.*

*Peace and all the best forever, Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan 5568 [7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1807].*

*From the komisarz wykonawca powiat Częstochowa [Commissioner of the District of Częstochowa] as well as by decree of the great lord Minister Skarbowy [the Minister of Treasury], we announce to each and every one of you, whomever you may be, that we warn you, on penalty of one-hundred Reichsthaler, that all are to bring here whatever books, both books in the holy tongue and Ashkenaz [Yiddish] books, anything the mouth may name or the*

mind may think of, including *The Twin Tablets*<sup>11</sup>, to be stamped. A law and a time are given you to bring them, eight days from this date and no later, upon penalty of 100 Reichsthaler, as mentioned above.

And anyone concealing but one book must pay a fine of 20 Reichsthaler. Therefore, we forewarn you not to say later that we did not announce this.

These are the words of the heads and leaders of the Jewish community of here, Częstochowa.

**Berisz Szapiro.**

In every town, the emissary bearing this note is to receive a bearer's fee of four-sixths [of a Reichsthaler] and the villages must each give 2 birds<sup>12</sup>; at the same time, we also warn all the settlements, which are under our control, to bring here the annual recruits' money within two days.

Here, Częstochowa, on the aforementioned day.

**Berisz Szapiro.**

(Here appears the stamp: *Kahal Adas Jeshurun po Częstochowa*<sup>13</sup>)

From this important document, we learn a great deal about the organisation of the Jewish *kehilla* in Częstochowa during the era of the Duchy of Warsaw. Firstly, we discover who the leader of the *kehilla* was in those times. His name was Berisz Szapiro. Unfortunately, we have no details about him. From the text of the proclamation, we see that the Jews were required to declare, within eight days, the books in their possession and have them stamped. Whoever disobeyed the order would pay a fine.

The *kehilla* had special emissaries who would travel around all the localities and receive payments [directly] from the book-owners themselves. Different prices were set for the towns and for the villages. The villagers in the countryside paid much less than the burghers in towns. The emissaries were, apparently, the *kehilla* collectors. The *kehilla* leader took advantage of the fact that they would be in the nearby towns and villages to stamp the books and announced that those, who had not yet paid the yearly recruits' taxes, were required to pay [them to] the same emissary.

This tax was one that Jews paid to be made exempt from military service. Only in 1812, after long meetings and negotiations, did the *kehillas* within the Duchy of Warsaw succeed in becoming exempt from the regular payment of the tax in return for one large payment of 700,000 *gulden*.

At first, an emissary was no more than the bearer of an evil decree. He would summon all the Jewish residents of a *shtetl* or village and read the proclamation before them. The representative of the locality in question would sign the proclamation, stating that the Jews had heard it read or that he himself had read it. An emissary had some fifteen such localities. If one wished to pay the stamping fee or the recruits' tax through him, one could do so. If not, one needed to bring the money directly to the *kehilla* in Częstochowa.

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<sup>11</sup> [TN: Satirical reference to the Tablets of the Covenant.]

<sup>12</sup> [TN: Probably nickname for groschen.]

<sup>13</sup> [TN: Kehilla of the Jewish Community here Częstochowa.]

In light of this same document, we can see that the *kehilla* in Częstochowa was the juridical representative not only of the Jews in the city, but also of a series of surrounding *shtetls* and rural settlements. True, it was lacking many attributes of an independent *kehilla*. Thus, for instance, it still had neither a rabbi nor a cemetery. This was only achieved during the period of Congress Poland (1815-1831). Its power, however, was great enough to overshadow many older and more numerous Jewish communities in the country.

The rapid development of the Częstochowa community was caused, first and foremost, by the city's favourable geographic position and the rapid industrialisation of the entire surrounding region. During the Congress-Poland period, the government encouraged foreign financiers and fine craftsmen to come to the country and help it in the development of industry and crafts. Thus, many German investors and craftsmen, from nearby Schlesien [Śląsk], came to Częstochowa. Jews were also amongst the first group. It is also not impossible that, among the long-time Jewish residents of Częstochowa, there were also a few who had settled there during the Prussian rule. True, during the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, they had been ordered to leave the country. Nevertheless, many remained - especially in the country's smaller cities. A sign that among the Częstochowa Jews, there were at the time already many, who had come from Germany, may be seen in the fact that the opulent Jews maintained teachers [for their children], who were especially brought over from abroad. This did not come so easily, because the local *mieszczanie* [burghers] fought every attempt to let a "foreign" Jew in, and even the Church opposed this. In 1818, two Jewish teachers, who gave private lessons there, were deported. They were Leon Guttenberg from Glogau [Głogów] (Schlesien) and Wilhelm Imier, who had been brought down from Praszka.

When [in Poland] they began instituting special "districts" for the Jewish population - effectively meaning ghettos - the Częstochowa municipal administration also did not wish to forgo this "privilege". At the time, Częstochowa had a larger proportion of Europeanised Jews than, for example, Warsaw. In 1818, a group of Jews from within this circle turned to the authorities with a proposal that they were willing to adopt European attire and also to educate their sons at the public schools. Therefore, they should be freed of the obligation to live in the Jewish district. We do not know what Town Hall's reply was. The fact itself, that some of the wealthy Jews owned houses outside the Jewish district, bears testimony that the Europeanised Jews did indeed live in Christian streets, just like in other Polish cities.

The first information regarding the industrial role of the Jews is also from this period. In 1827, there are already accounts of Jewish factories in town, which sold "Częstochowa products". We do not know the nature of these factories. Some Jews engaged in contraband. This is to be seen from the frequent orders of expulsion from the Częstochowa area. A large part of these contrabandists, in fact, later settled in Łódź.

From the first pioneers of Częstochowa industry and commerce sprang forth those families which would, over time, occupy an important place in local Jewish communal life. In the 1830's, the leader of the Częstochowa *kehilla* was the opulent man and *Maskil*<sup>14</sup>, Herc Kon (1798-1862). He supported the endeavours of the small group of *Maskilim* to propagate worldly education among the local Jews and even opened a private school for Jewish children.

Jews from the surrounding towns and *shtetls* began flocking to Częstochowa in order to seek their livelihoods there. The municipality was vigilant that "foreign" Jews should not settle there, but this was unsuccessful. These illegal residents lived in constant fear of being expelled from the city. There was a time (around 1829), when the number of such families reached fully one hundred, or almost

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<sup>14</sup> [TN: Lit. "enlightened," i.e. follower of Haskala or the Jewish Enlightenment Movement.]

half of the entire Jewish populace. In 1827, the official number of Jews in Częstochowa was 1,141, making up 18.5% of the city's general population.

The Jews, lacking the right to residence, apparently had sources of income in town, because they spent large sums on legal support from the municipality [in order to not be deported]. The Town Elders and the police had a not bad revenue from the systematic bribes that these unauthorised Jews paid.

Very early on, a Jewish plutocracy began to emerge in Częstochowa, for whom a small amount of respect, which could be gained through public works within the narrow limits of *kehilla* life, was already far from sufficient. We must not forget that, amongst the wealthy men in Częstochowa, there were many who had received a general [viz. secular] education in schools inside the country or abroad. Their frequent visits to Germany quickly "Europeanised" them and they wished to see implemented, in their own city, many of the reforms that, at the time, were already being put into effect in the larger German *kehillas*.

Also in the craftsmen's circle, there were proponents of modern Jewish life in the German style. In 1841, in Częstochowa, there were 32 Jewish weavers with 160 looms and 200 Jewish apprentices. The teachers were usually German masters. As a consequence, they [viz. the weavers] knew German and viewed German culture as the last word in progress. Even the *kehilla's* announcements, in 1833-1862, were usually written in German, only printed using Hebrew characters.

It is, therefore, no wonder that some individuals, who already saw themselves as progressive people, sought to rise in general [i.e. non-Jewish] communal life. This could be achieved either through a personal privilege or by converting to Christianity. The privilege was manifested, first and foremost, in the right to live outside the Jewish ghetto. A higher form of privilege was the right to own one's own estate.

The story of Szymon Landau-Guttenberg, the son of Wilhelm Landau, a German Jew who settled in Częstochowa back in the days of the Duchy of Warsaw, is very interesting in this respect.

Szymon Landau was a wealthy Częstochowa merchant and manufacturer. In December 1833, he approached the authorities with the request to be granted citizen's rights. In his detailed petition, he writes that he and his household speak and write Polish and German. "This", he assures, "may be very easily confirmed by the municipal administration."

He goes on to inform them that his children attend the public schools and that he, himself, does "not exhibit any of the external signs that the Jews wear". He furthermore stipulates that he will not hire any Jews in his businesses except those "who dress in Polish or German attire and are fluent in one of these two languages". Landau tells them that, since 1822, he has had a factory making calico and cotton products in the country.

The question regarding Szymon Landau's citizenship was deliberated for nearly two years. The authorities in Warsaw answered him (12<sup>th</sup> March 1835) that his merits for the country were not large enough as to make him entitled to citizenship. Landau was permitted to reside outside the ghetto due to the fact that he was rich, wore European clothing and sent his children to general schools.

As consequence, Szymon Landau's son was luckier. In 1863, he was permitted to buy an estate in the Kielce region, thus fulfilling, in the third generation, the ambition of a pioneer Jewish family in Poland - to become Polish nobility and to be able to enter the highest echelon of the country's society.

Among the other families, who were able to attain citizenship, we should also mention the banking family of Adam Bergman, Wilhelm Kohn and the Wolberg and Landowski families.

There were, however, also those whose “luck did not pan out” or who did not have enough money to be able rise in their superiority and to liberate themselves from the Jewish public, which was forced to live in the narrow alleys of the Jewish district. They tried to improve their status through conversion to Christianity. But, they were apparently ashamed to convert within Częstochowa itself. The Pauline monks of Jasna Góra even had a special fund with which to support converts, but the local candidates for the Catholic Church actually travelled to Warsaw in order to commit the disgraceful act of renouncing their faith there, far from home and family. The majority of apostates in Częstochowa itself were not locals, but from the surrounding towns and *shtetls*.

In 1833, a Częstochowa townsman converted in Warsaw - one Balsam, who immediately changed his name to the Polish-sounding “Bałsamowski”. In 1838, the local tailor Bortsztajn<sup>15</sup> travelled, with his wife, to Warsaw and converted there. In 1843, the local teacher Gerszom Wiślicki, together with his wife, did the same. One of the city’s leading financial entrepreneurs, Jakow Jakubowicz, converted in 1847. The case of the conversion in the house of the wealthy man and *kehilla* representative Herc caused great distress and uneasiness - one of his sons converted in Warsaw in 1865.

The [derogatory] appellation “Częstochower *shmadnikes*” [apostates] had no connection with the tendencies towards *Haskala* that in Częstochowa, in particular, were felt more strongly than in other cities, but precisely with the actual apostates, which caused great unrest in town.

The growth of Jewish Częstochowa gave rise to the establishment of various charitable institutions. The poor flocked to the community, which soon gained the reputation of being a wealthy one. But, when the years 1846-1847 came, when the country lived through a crisis and hunger pervaded many homes, the Częstochowa *kehilla* was forced to organise emergency support for its [own] poor. The efforts made to the effect that Jews be permitted to work at the local limestone mines, even if only as a temporary source of income, were rejected by the government.

The *kehilla* was not prepared for a relief operation on such a scale, as it had always viewed the poor of its own city as “temporary guests”, who had come there to try their luck with the “permanent residents”. The latter prided themselves that they could prove that their families had settled in Częstochowa during the times of the Duchy of Warsaw, which automatically made them see themselves as the “patricians”. Częstochowa was, for many of the Jews from the surrounding towns and *shtetls*, a sort of transit-city, where you could seek a livelihood. If you struck it lucky, you stayed there – and, if not, one moved on to Łódź which, at the time, lured you with the spell of pioneering enterprises, which bordered on truly fantastic-sounding business ventures.

It is from this period that the proclamation comes from of a pioneering, enlightened Jew named Icek Bursztyn or Bursztynski, the local correspondent for the “*Algemeine Zeitung des Judentum*” [General Newspaper of Judaism], which the renowned Rabbi Dr Ludwig Philippsohn published in Magdeburg since 1838. Bursztynski appealed to Częstochowa Jews to become accustomed to systemically giving donations, instead of just throwing an offering when a poor man knocked on a Jewish door. He suggested the setting of a monthly tax, over six months, for the benefit of the crisis victims.

“Where there is honesty and justice”, he wrote, “so before our very eyes, we should allow the needy members of our congregation to succumb to starvation and die in the streets of our city?”

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<sup>15</sup> [TN: Although this surname did exist, it is possibly a misprint, as in the “Index of Names Mentioned in the Book Czenstochover Yidn,” in the book “Czenstochov” (1958), it appears as “Bornsztajn.”]



He appealed to the city's Jews to contribute to such a fund. The city had plenty of wealthy residents and giving a donation "*wird einen balebos wenig berühren, aber für die Elenden von große Nutzen sein*" [will affect one *balebos* (Heb., burgher) only a little, but be of great use to the poor], he wrote, in his half-Hebrew-half-German<sup>16</sup> proclamation.

In the history of Częstochowa, this was the first large public project to benefit the city's poor or those who had become impoverished. The fact that this operation was not organised by the *Kehilla* Council itself, but was the lone initiative of one individual, proves that, even though the Częstochowa *kehilla* was second only to Warsaw in the "progressiveness" of its *parnosim*, it was still very backwards as regards to matters of *kehilla* organisation.

During the cholera epidemic of 1852, a more organised operation was seen in Częstochowa. Charity balls were held, money was collected and more attention, in general, was directed at the victims of the epidemic. This charity was more prophylactic in nature, as it helped the wealthy elements of the Jewish populace to shield themselves from the epidemic.

At around this time, the local Jewish populace grew very quickly. In 1840, Jews constituted almost a third of the entire population. For 5,004 Christians, in Częstochowa, there were then 2,299 Jews. But the city's general population began to expand at a much faster rate than the Jewish one. This was due to the fact that the industrialisation of the city drew many new residents, especially from the nearby villages, who came to work in the Częstochowa factories. For Jews, settling in the city was severely limited by the strict monitoring of the Jewish district and the systematic regimentation of the Jewish residents. In 1857, the city's general population numbered 8,637, of whom 2,976 were Jews - which constitutes 34.5%. In 1862, there were 3,360 Jews in Częstochowa (37.3% of the general population).

In 1862, a great tragedy befell Częstochowa. On 4<sup>th</sup> November, a horrific fire broke out which, primarily, affected the poorer Jews of the city. This was during the times of the "Polish-Jewish Brotherhood". This joint operation, which was carried out by the Jews and the Poles, truly had an importance as a demonstration of "practical love". The committee included a priest and a rabbi. The chairman was Bernard Kon, owner of a large mill and a member of the City Council. Many Christians donated money - 14,000 *złoty* were collected.

This fire was used as a convincing argument to abolish the Jewish district, because the blaze had been the result of over-crowding and filthy conditions. Lobbying for an extension to the Jewish district up to Aleja Najświętszej Maryi Panny [Avenue of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary], including the marketplace, began as early as 1859. In 1862, the Częstochowa City Council resolved to abolish the district altogether. The Town Elders took pride in the fact that their decision had come even before the [governmental] decree that comprehensively abolished all these ghettos throughout Congress Poland.

In that period of 1861-1863, a strong pro-Polish spirit actually pervaded [Jewish] Częstochowa - which was manifested in solidarity with the Polish national ideal. Besides Bernard Kon, the burghers Bernard Majzel, Icek Ginsberg, Icek Fajgenblat and Jakow Zejdenman were elected to the City Council. These four Jews were representatives [of the Jewish populace], while Bernard Kon was councilor.

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<sup>16</sup> [TN: The German is written in Hebrew characters.]

Spirits were so high, that the newspaper "*Jutrzenka*" [Morning Star or Aurora] published a letter by one of the Częstochowa Jews against Moses Hess<sup>17</sup>. That same Jew wrote that "the Land of Israel is but a dream" and that "our homeland is Poland". The letter was supposedly written in reply to a Częstochowa Christian, who wanted to know whether the Jews in the city felt themselves as Poles.

The fact itself, that Częstochowa was second only to Warsaw in the great activity it showed in the years before the uprising of 1863, elicited an enthusiastic response in the Polish press.

In 1861-1863, in Częstochowa, there was a considerable group of Jewish youth who were already culturally Polish and who took an interest in political matters. Their proximity to the Prussian border enabled the local youth to have much easier access to political literature than the youth in Warsaw. It was easier to smuggle, simply due to the fact that people from Częstochowa visited Breslau and Königsberg much more frequently than those from Warsaw. Thus, Moses Hess' book *Rome and Jerusalem* fell into the hands of a *maskil* in Częstochowa long before arriving in Warsaw.

As a result, Częstochowa also played a major role in the propagation of forbidden works and in the smuggling in of revolutionary literature and later – already during the uprising – in smuggling weaponry.

The Polish *émigrés* used Częstochowa as a safe transit-point for the smuggling of literature. Local Jews, who were experienced in matters of contraband, greatly distinguished themselves in this work. Among the youth were numerous students of schools in Warsaw and of the rabbinical seminary in particular.

They were ardently passionate about the Polish patriotic movement before the uprising - bringing news to their city, writing in the Polish newspapers, sending letters to the weekly newspaper *Jutrzenka* and, later, helping take care of the wounded insurgents and transferring them to Kraków. They were known in the revolutionary circles, so that it is no wonder that, in the secret instructions from the Polish revolutionary committee of 1863, the "strings [connecting] to the Poles of the Mosaic faith in Częstochowa" are mentioned.

In 1862, a patriotic demonstration took place in Częstochowa at which Daniel Neufeld spoke. We shall subsequently have the opportunity to write at length about him. Jewish pupils of the Częstochowa public schools took part in this meeting. Among the active participants in the uprising were several young Częstochowa Jews. Following the uprising of 1863, some Częstochowa Jews were arrested. Szmul Widowski was detained and placed under police custody for a period of two years. One Josef Kon fled abroad. When he returned, he was arrested and placed under police custody - also for two years.

The most prominent of the Jewish patriots was Szymon Dankowicz, upon whose biography it is worthwhile to pause.

Dankowicz was born in Częstochowa in 1841. His mother was a midwife. He completed public school and studied at the district school. In 1859, he travelled to Warsaw and registered as a student at the Academy of Surgical Medicine. When the Academy closed, with the opening of a Polish university (Szkoła Główna) [The Main School], Dankowicz also transferred there in order to study medicine. He was member of the Warsaw youth circle which had set itself the goal to propagate, among the Jewish youth, the ideal of Polish assimilation. In that circle, in November 1860, Dankowicz gave a lecture regarding the Jews, which was brave and new. Dankowicz developed the idea that the Jews

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<sup>17</sup> [TN: French-Jewish philosopher; founder and proponent of Labour Zionism, viz. building a socialist state for Jews specifically within the borders of the biblical Land of Israel.]

had not ceased to be a nation, despite having lost their land. This was doubtlessly the influence of Moshe Hess' *Rome and Jerusalem*, which had just that year been published and which mostly elicited a negative appraisal. In those honey-years<sup>18</sup> of assimilation, coming forth in Warsaw with such a thesis required great courage and independence of thought.

A passionate discussion developed around this lecture. The young Aleksander Krauzhar, who actively participated in this circle, describes Dankowicz's lecture and the discussion in a letter to a friend. What leaks out from it is that not everyone [present there] was opposed to Dankowicz's thesis.

"Opinions were heard", he writes, "that there is no nation without a land and that only the land where they were born should be regarded as a homeland for the Jews. This view was met with a great many supporters."

The very fact that Krauzhar writes that *many* disagreed with Dankowicz's opinion, at a time when it was possible to predict they *all* would oppose it, proves that not everyone at the time saw themselves as "Poles who are adherents to the faith of Moses". It is clear that Dankowicz did not see himself as such. He was the first nationalist Jew amongst the Jewish intelligentsia in Poland at the time. This is even more apparent from the article written in the weekly paper *Jutrzenka* which was published in Warsaw between 1863-1961, under editorship of Daniel Neufeld. This same Neufeld had already become acquainted with Dankowicz back in Częstochowa. Neufeld invited him to send articles for his journal through the editor's mailbox.

In the *Jutrzenka*, number 12 from 1862, an article appeared by Dankowicz entitled *Sayings and Parables in Rabbinical Literature*, in which he wrote, among other things:

*Parables always present the philosophy of a nation. Therefore, every nation (naród), whether on a high educational level or on the lowest one, gathers its parables, which constitute a memorial. They always preserve them carefully and lovingly.*

Dankowicz expresses his wish that "our fellow believers should dedicate themselves to gathering all the popular Jewish sayings, traditions and even the unique expressions of Yiddish jargon".

The article aroused dissatisfaction in the most extreme assimilationist circles, but Neufeld shielded Dankowicz and stood by him.

Dankowicz was one of the most dynamic figures amongst the Jewish youth during the uprising. He actively participated in a series of battles and was wounded. Thanks to the assistance of a group of Poles, he was brought, wounded, to Kraków. There, he was healed. In the beginning, he was a Hebrew teacher. In 1867, he was appointed preacher in the "Jewish Synagogue for Friends of Progress" in Kraków. His opening sermon, on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1868, was published, in print, by that synagogue.

Meanwhile, Dankowicz continued his studies and received a doctorate from the University of Kraków. He was appointed a Jewish religion teacher at the local *gimnazja* [secondary schools]. Between 1868 and 1883, he held positions as a progressive rabbi and teacher of religion, all in smaller communities. He could not remain in Kraków due to the persecution of the orthodox. He moved to Bulgaria, becoming the first Chief Rabbi of the nascent state. He left Bulgaria in 1893. Nothing is known regarding as what happened to him or when he died<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> [TN: As in honeymoon.]

<sup>19</sup> [TN: Alicja Maslak-Maciejewska states in "Progressive Preacher Szymon Dankowicz (1834- 1910)" that he died in Vienna in 1910].

The poor young man from Częstochowa found fame as a Hebrew lexicographer. His articles on Hebrew philology and on the influence of Hebrew on Slavic languages were published in the most important periodicals of that time, and he also intended to write a history of the Jews in Poland.

A restless soul, Dankowicz was never able to find a permanent place for himself. His writings have been lost and his name has been forgotten. Many biographers say that he was from Bohemia, as he served there, as Rabbi, for a short period.

The son of the midwife from Częstochowa was, in fact, the first Jewish folklorist in Poland, and a precursor of the nationalistic idea, at a time when the idea of assimilation was intrinsically bound with the concept of general “progress”.

### 3. The Cultural History of Jewish Częstochowa

As mentioned already, Częstochowa, after Warsaw, was the city in Poland in which *Haskala* grew and developed the most out of all Poland’s cities. As early as 1814, private Jewish tutors, who came from Germany to teach the children of the wealthy, were found there. The best [Jewish] teachers from the adjacent towns and *shtetls*, like Działoszyn, Praszka and Wieluń, would settle in Częstochowa. One of them, for example, was the *Maskil* from Działoszyn, Szlojme-Dawid Gutentog, who would give private Hebrew lessons to the children attending Częstochowa’s public schools.

The wealthy youth attended the state schools in Piotrków, Kalisz and Warsaw. The rich daughters of Częstochowa were sent to schools in Breslau, Königsberg and Berlin, where there were private boarding schools “für israelitische Mädchen” [for Israelite maidens], in which they guarded these “daughters of Zion” and guided them towards “[finding favour and good understanding in the sight of] God and man”.<sup>19</sup>

We may ascertain that the cultural language of the educated Jews, at the time, was German. The *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentum* [The General Newspaper of Judaism] had eleven regular subscribers and one special correspondent in Częstochowa. Incidentally, even Warsaw did not always have this [number of subscribers at the time].

When the rabbinical seminary was opened in Warsaw (in 1826), many youths from Częstochowa studied there. Bernard Cymerman, Maurycy Kon and Bernard Landau studied there in 1830. This same Cymerman was later a censor and even a teacher in that seminary. Bernard Landau was a teacher and Maurycy Kon was the owner of a factory and an estate.

After the rebellion of 1863, the number of Częstochowa youths at the rabbinical seminary grew and, by the time that it was closed (in 1863), their number had reached twelve.

Between 1826 and 1840, twenty six young Jews from Częstochowa studied in educational institutions outside their hometown. A few among them studied medicine and later worked in their profession in their hometown, such as Dr Landowski, for example.

In 1841, the *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentum* wrote:

*“In no other Jewish community in Poland is there such an animated tendency to humanism as in Częstochowa. Almost all the townspeople, even those who wear the long garments of*

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<sup>19</sup> [TN: The words in brackets are from the translation to Hebrew in *Sefer Częstochowa Vol. I*; see Proverbs 3:4.]

*Polish Jews, have a developed sense of the necessity for a better and more modern culture. All celebrate the success of the Haskala movement among the Jews of Germany and in other places. A considerable section of the local Jews also read books in German and Polish and mainly on the subjects of progress, ethics and fine literature. It may be said that religious fanaticism, superstitious beliefs and nonsense have almost disappeared among the upper-class Jews."*

In a second letter from Częstochowa, printed in that same German-Jewish newspaper, it is stated that *Haskala* was even stronger than Chassidism. Of 400 families in Częstochowa, only 25 were Chassidic.

Częstochowa, it said in the same article, was the first of all the Jewish communities in Poland which, due to its connections with Silesia in the areas of commerce and industry, also came into contact with matters of enlightenment and culture. Partly, this came from the German language, the European clothing and feeling of cleanliness, order and organisation, which the local Jews had learnt from the "moralistic revolution" in Poland, viz. before the uprising. From 1863, educational activity was carried out more in Polish than in German. In 1860, the Częstochowa Jews could take pride in a hundred Jewish youths who were studying in public schools, *gimnazja*, and the Warsaw rabbinical seminary. That year, nine Częstochowa Jews completed university.

Very early on, the local *kehilla* began making efforts towards its own primary school for Jewish children.

This action was connected to the names of two Jews, who occupy the first place in the history of *Haskala* in Częstochowa. These were the already aforementioned Jakow Bursztyński and Daniel Neufeld.

Bursztyński, or Bursztyn, was born in 1790 in Zagórow (Koniń district). He was a private Hebrew teacher and was later appointed as a sworn translator of Yiddish and Hebrew by the Kalisz *województwo* [Province]. He later settled in Praszka as a tutor. When the Częstochowa City Council deported the two Jewish private teachers, Guttenberg and Imier, because they had no right of residence there, the local *kehilla* invited Bursztyński to become its secretary. Besides this, he was also employed as teacher and preacher at the city synagogue.

Thanks to the intervention of the head of the *Kehilla*, Herc Kon, Bursztyński was allowed to live in Częstochowa for three years (1828-1831), but he was not allowed to bring his family.

Bursztyński knew Polish very well, which was a rarity among Jews at the time because, as mentioned above, until 1860, the language of the cultured Jews was predominately German. It is therefore no wonder that the Jewish populace required his services. He wrote court applications, business letters and was even appointed as interpreter for the Częstochowa Justice of the Peace. His two sons were then in the Kalisz *gymnazjum* and later studied medicine in Germany.

Thus, Bursztyński became a "private lawyer", meaning that he wrote all manner of petitions and letters. This matter displeased the local Polish lawyers and they reported him to the municipal authorities. The Town Hall forbade him from occupying himself with writing such letters. Bursztyński, however, did not lose himself and he addressed the mayor in a memorandum proving the legality of his activities. Meanwhile, the rebellion of 1830-1831 broke out and the conflict subsided.

At the end of 1831, the persecutions against him resumed and his opponents also used the legal argument that, considering the three years during which he was allowed to live in Częstochowa had

elapsed, he had to leave the city anyway and it no longer mattered whether his work as a “private lawyer” was legal or not. The municipality demanded that he leave the city within five days. The *Kehilla* supported him, but he himself probably felt that there was no legal basis for him to remain in the city, because he was an “alien”. He was therefore forced to wage a war all by himself, which he won, because the *województwo* [Province] authorities allowed him to stay in Częstochowa, but only on the condition that he lived inside the Jewish district. After lengthy legal processes, he finally remained in town, where he died in 1852, falling victim to the cholera epidemic.

Over the course of the years, during which he lived in Częstochowa, Bursztyński achieved a great deal in propagating secular education amongst Jews. As mentioned above, he was also the Częstochowa correspondent for the *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentum*. His letters [to the paper] are an important source for research into Częstochowa’s Jewish history.

Bursztyński had become convinced that the education problem of the local Jews could not be solved with private tutoring. He wrote that the rich usually had good teachers and *melamdim* for their children. As they were able to pay, they chose and sent for the best pedagogues for themselves. The poor, on the other hand, were forced to resort to the lowliest of *melamdim* and to send their children to filthy, cramped *cheders*. Bursztyński, therefore, held that a city, like Częstochowa, needed to have a public primary school for the less privileged strata. He submitted a detailed project to this effect. The school was to have three classes with three teachers and, in addition, a headmaster. He also declared his willingness to teach religion and morals [there], without compensation. School maintenance would be covered by the tuition fees. To also endow the schools with public prestige, a Parents Council was to be chosen, at the head of which would be the [city’s] Rabbi. With that, he hoped to win over the religious circles. The Orthodox, needless to say, fought against Bursztyński’s project. But, for that same reason, the *Maskilim*, headed by the leader of the *Kehilla*, Herc Kon, supported his plan. It was put forward several times at the municipal synagogue and the study-hall. Signatures of burghers were collected and a petition was handed over to the authorities. This was in 1840. The Polish municipal administration received this proposal very warmly. Bursztyński, himself, wrote in a letter that the new mayor, Pazerski, was very amiably disposed towards the plan and had recommended it to the higher State agencies. Bursztyński and his governmental endorsers apparently did not know that the Russian “powers that be” were opposed to Polish[-language] schools for Jewish children. They were waiting until the general regulation concerning primary schools for Jews in Russia was ready. [Ivan] Paskevich, the *Namiestnik* [Viceroy] of Poland, meanwhile stopped the issuing of licenses for such schools.

Bursztyński was so sure of gaining permission, that he brought his disciple Daniel Neufeld over to Częstochowa from Praszka [to serve as a teacher at the school]. In the meantime, Neufeld engaged in giving private lessons.

Bursztyński was also a writer. Besides Polish and Hebrew, he also knew German and Yiddish very well. A work of his in Polish, written in 1820, has remained in manuscript form. It is a treatise on blood-libels. This is the only work that has been preserved. Many other writings of his were lost. In those years when, in Poland, there were no Jewish periodicals in Polish or Yiddish, it was difficult for a person like Bursztyński to gain [publication of his] words.

As a promoter of education, as *kehilla* secretary, private teacher, hedge-lawyer [and] organiser of charity in Częstochowa, Bursztyński rightly earned for himself the title of the first pioneer in the realm of [secular] Jewish education and upbringing in Częstochowa.

The second education activist in Częstochowa was the renowned editor of the Warsaw Jewish Polish-language weekly, *Jutrzenka*, which appeared [only] in the years 1861-1863. This was Daniel-Josef Neufeld.

Neufeld was born in Praszka in 1814. In 1827, he attended the district school at Wieluń, which was run by priests. At the time, there were very few Jewish students in Polish schools, especially in the provinces. Neufeld wished to study medicine, but family matters and the revolt of 1831 disrupted his plans. He settled in Działoszyn and became a tutor. He was later married in Praszka, and [it is] from there that Bursztyński brought him to Częstochowa. While Bursztyński was working on organising a school, Neufeld occupied himself with giving private Hebrew and Polish lessons. Thanks to these lessons, he became acquainted with the *elite* of the Jewish community and also with Polish society. He was strongly acclaimed in both circles. The Jews had a great deference for him because, despite his being a *Maskil*, he was a religious Jew and a great Torah scholar to boot. The Poles, furthermore, respected him due to the fact that he was not only a Polish sympathiser, but knew the Polish language and literature very well.

From Częstochowa, Neufeld sent articles and letters to the *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums*. These were his first literary fruits.

Once Bursztyński's plans for a Jewish primary school fell through, Neufeld tried his own luck at receiving a permit to open a private school. In 1843, he turned to the Curator of Education in Warsaw requesting permission to open a private primary school for Jewish children. But they refused him. At that point, several prominent Częstochowa townspeople turned directly to [St] Petersburg, to the Minister of Education [Count Sergei] Uvarov, to the effect that Neufeld be allowed to [legally] engage in pedagogy. After long deliberations, they managed to secure a permit for Neufeld for a school - only not in Częstochowa, but in Praszka. This was in 1847. According to the juridical interpretation [of the matter], considering that Neufeld was not a citizen of Częstochowa, but of Praszka, he could therefore engage in pedagogy in his "own" town, but not in any "foreign" ones.

Praszka, however, was far too small to be able to maintain its own Jewish private school. In Częstochowa, Neufeld had already gained a reputation. This city, with its *Maskilim*, strongly appealed to him. He therefore did not give up the hope that, at some point, he would finally be able to become a teacher and an instructor for Częstochowa Jews.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1850, Neufeld turned to the Curator of Education with a plea to be allowed to sit for an examination to be granted a teacher's certificate, due to the fact that the curriculum at the district school, which he had completed, was equivalent to the curriculum of the general studies at the rabbinical seminary. In this manner, Neufeld wished, first of all, to be legally qualified as a teacher, which would automatically make it easier for him to later obtain a permit for a school.

Two months later, he received a reply from the Curator of Education to the effect that he would not be allowed to sit for such an examination.

The Curator explained:

*"A teacher's title requires an examination according to the full curriculum of a gymnazjum or of the rabbinical seminary. Considering that the private school, which Neufeld has completed, stands in the level of a powiat [district] school, I therefore cannot approve that his request be accepted."*

Neufeld, however, did not despair. In April 1851, he writes a detailed memorandum on his pedagogical activities in general, requesting, based foremost on his practical experience, permission to open a private school in Częstochowa. "The school in Praszka" this time Neufeld is applied for not to the Curator of Education in Warsaw, but to the director of the district *gymnazjum* in Piotrków, "I have been forced to close down", He had been left with three pupils in total and they, too, would be leaving the school within the coming week. Neufeld calls attention to the fact that the Częstochowa Jews want him in the city as a teacher.

Neufeld writes:

*"The Jews in Częstochowa are happily free from any nonsense [viz. religious superstitions], so that they have invited me to open, in their city, a private school for their children."*

This time, Neufeld was luckier. It is more than certain that he had been given this permit thanks to people on the side who had better connections in Piotrków than in Warsaw. In July 1851, the longed-for permit arrived. Neufeld opened the school on ul. Garncarska 23. This was an exemplary school - one of the best in the provinces. This school also had boarding accommodation, as children had also begun to be sent there from other towns and *shtetls*. His Hebrew teacher was Josef Szajnhak - a *Maskil* and the author of an array of works on natural science.

Neufeld wished to broaden the school's curriculum so that, after finishing his school, graduates should be able to be admitted to a *gymnazjum*. In February 1852, he requested permission to teach French, History and Geography. The Curator of Education immediately realised what Neufeld's intentions were and - needless to say - he did not issue him a permit.

Neufeld's school existed to May 1860. Over the course of these ten years, the school produced a generation that later occupied an important place in Częstochowa's Jewish life. From the biographies of Jewish merchants and doctors in Łódź, Włocławek and Płock, we learn that many of them attended Neufeld's school in Częstochowa. It is difficult to say whether he himself was a good pedagogue [or not]. But he had good pupils. There was a time when the school had a hundred pupils, a quarter of whom were from other localities. The out-of-towners were mostly from well-to-do homes, as it cost no small sum of money to maintain them at Neufeld's boarding school.

Neufeld was by no means a practical man. As a result, he did not view his school - or even the boarding accommodation - as a business. He, therefore, could not develop his educational institution to match the model which the German Jews had set in Breslau and Königsberg, and where there were numerous Częstochowa children. It is, therefore, no wonder that this school, lacking a good administration, over the course of time, began to lose money. As a consequence, Neufeld was forced to close it down. Meanwhile, the famous publisher Orgelbrand invited him to Warsaw to become editor of the Jewish section of the great Polish encyclopaedia [*Encyklopedia Powszechna* (Universal Encyclopaedia)] that was [then] beginning to be published.

At the end of May 1860, Neufeld turned to the Curator of Education with the request that he be permitted to relocate his school to Warsaw. However, he himself withdrew his petition two months later.

The rest of Neufeld's biography has no bearing on the history of the Jews in Częstochowa. The only thing worth mentioning is that he participated in the events of 1861-1863, for which he was sent to Siberia. He returned from there sick and broken. For some time, he had a book business in Piotrków. He died in Warsaw in September 1874.



He never severed his ties with Częstochowa. His family remained living there. His daughter married the book dealer Leopold Kon, who later became a successful manufacturer in Częstochowa.

His two sons were doctors. Some members of his brother's family converted to Christianity. The renowned Polish translator Bronisława Neufeld was his brother's daughter.

But he left many pupils back in Częstochowa, among whom were several who later participated in the Polish-Jewish press. One of them - Branicki - wrote for *Jutrzenka*, which Neufeld had edited. Generally speaking, Neufeld printed relatively many more letters from Częstochowa than from other cities.

Another writer was Szymon Bergman (the father of the Częstochowa banker, Adam Bergman). He wrote in Hebrew and Polish. Neufeld's most beloved pupil was Mojsze Majmon (1812-1874). He was the son of the Rabbi of Działoszyn. Majmon completed the rabbinical seminary [and] contributed to the *Jutrzenka* and *Izraelita* [periodicals]. He died in Częstochowa in the same year as his teacher Neufeld, whose elder he was by two years.

As soon as Neufeld's school had been liquidated, a new "Enlightened" pedagogue tried his luck in Częstochowa. The city could no longer do without a school for Jewish children. True, the extremely religious Jews disapproved of this school, but the city had too large a following for secular education that such an institution be undercut by denunciations or simple intrigues.

A Jewish private teacher had lived since 1856 in Częstochowa - Neufeld's *landsmann*. His name was Chaim-Mojsze, or Moryc [Maurycy, below] Zys. In 1858, Zys petitioned the Curator of Education for a license to open a [private] school. It took the scholastic authorities two years to decide to approve his request. They apparently thought that one school for Neufeld was enough for a city like Częstochowa. The *Kehilla* leadership did not wish to disrupt Neufeld's school, so they refused to back Zys' request. It was only when Neufeld closed down his school that the *Kehilla*, which was mostly made up of "Enlightened" councillors, deemed it important that Zys should be granted a license. On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1860, the Częstochowa "*Dozór Bóżniczy*" [Synagogue Supervision, viz. *kehilla*] officially attested that Maurycy Zys was "a good and God-fearing teacher" and that it would, therefore, be a good thing should he be permitted to open a primary school for Jewish children. The *Kehilla* thereby requested to be made exempt from paying the school tax which was, in effect, to benefit of the local Christian schools. Even though these schools were open to Jewish children, few parents sent their children there. The tax [the *Kehilla* paid] reached 700 roubles a year. The *Kehilla* worked out that were this sum to put at the disposal of a Jewish school, at least 150 children from poor homes would be able to study free of charge, thus removing children from the *cheders*. Meanwhile, Zys was granted a license to open the school but, with this, the matter was far from being settled.

In January 1861, Muchanow, the Curator of Education, inquired as to how much the Jewish community paid for the maintenance of the Catholic primary school. He also wanted to know "from what sources it would be possible to cover the Catholic school's deficit, were the government to grant the *Kehilla's* request."

It became clear that the concession which Zys had been given had nothing to do with the plan of the school which the *Kehilla* intended to create. The *Kehilla* had wished Neufeld to be the school's headmaster and, when Neufeld departed for Warsaw, it was decided that Maurycy Zys would become the headmaster. This was in accordance with the plan which Bursztyński had had in 1841, i.e. not a private school, but a public one, maintained by the *Kehilla* with the aid of the school-tax, with which the Catholic school had hitherto been maintained.

The Catholic school feared that it would lose part of its income. The government was not interested in covering the loss of 700 roubles, to the school's income, from its own budget. Muchanow did not wish the Jews to have a Polish school at all. The uprising, meanwhile, had pushed aside matters such as education and schools. They dragged the matter out for so long, until a law was issued that the language of instruction in school was to be exclusively Russian. Thus, the plan for a school was only first realised in 1867, this time in Russian. Zys, meanwhile, went off to Łódź, where he became headmaster of the primary school that the local *kehilla* had opened. But, besides the Russian authorities, Polish society in Częstochowa was also opposed to a separate Jewish school. In 1862, thanks to [Marquis Aleksander] Wielopolski's<sup>20</sup> scholastic policy, general five-grade county schools were opened, at which everyone was permitted to attend. Forty-seven Jewish pupils immediately enrolled in the Częstochowa school. In this manner, the matter of a separate school for Jewish children was rendered no longer relevant. The religious Jews took no interest at all in this whole school question. They continued sending their children to the *cheders*. The very, assimilated strata, on the other hand, did not even wish to hear of a separate school for Jewish children. For them, the question of education was solved individually - according to their [personal] convictions and income.

#### 4. The Jews in Częstochowa in the Years 1863-1914

Immediately following the uprising of 1863, when Poland entered the period of "organic work", which aimed to exchange the ideology of national freedom for a programme of economic independence, Częstochowa began to play a great role as an industrial and commercial centre. In certain aspects, Częstochowa even matched Łódź. Łódź, however, presented better opportunities, so that many Jewish industrial pioneers moved there. Thus, for example, the great cotton merchant in Łódź, Ludwig Kon, who played a huge role in the Łódź industry in 1861-1870, was a Częstochowa Jew.

There is no accurate statistical data on Częstochowa's Jewish population. The only thing we know is that, in 1897, the city numbered 43,863 souls, of whom 11,764 were Jewish. This means that the Jews made up 29.5% of the general population. Since 1857, the general population had expanded five times over - while the Jewish population had grown by almost a multiple of six. Nevertheless, the Jewish part, within the general population, had decreased. In 1857, the Jews made up 34.5% of the general population, but in 1897 it was only 29.7%.

In 1862, the Jewish districts were abolished. This came as a result of Wielopolski's act of Jewish emancipation. As mentioned above, Częstochowa had always taken pride in the fact that the local municipality had approved a resolution to abolish the Jewish ghetto two years before this act was proclaimed. Abolishing the district not only meant that Jews could live throughout the whole city, but that they could also settle undisturbed in Częstochowa. In fact, many Jews from the surrounding towns and *shtetls* began to swarm there. A curious migration ensued. Many of the first pioneers of industry and commerce, who had gone through "pox and measles"<sup>21</sup> in Częstochowa, wandered over to Warsaw and Łódź, where they hoped to better invest their capital and practical experience. Jews with little or no capital began streaming to Częstochowa from the poorer towns and *shtetls*, and began building up new industries and trades. In this manner, they contributed to the city's economic growth.

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<sup>20</sup> [TN: Polish nobleman who in 1862 was appointed head of Poland's Civil Administration within the Russian Empire under Tsar Alexander II.]

<sup>21</sup> [TN: Due to these two diseases being once considered incurable, and which all children needed to pass in order to reach adulthood, the expression "to go through pox and measles" was used to denote that all possible efforts had been made.]

In 1897, Szmul-Rafael Landau, the founder of “Proletariat Zionism”, visited Częstochowa and wrote an interesting report about it. By his estimate, there was a population of 45,000 in the city, of whom 15,000 were Jewish. Landau wrote that most Jews lived from commerce. The frequent throngs of pilgrims, who came to visit the “Holy Mary”, gave life to the commerce.

In Częstochowa, he visited the *kloyz* [house of prayer or study-hall] and the two Jewish lodging houses. He writes:

*“An actual Jewish middle class is completely lacking here – barely 400 people pay kehilla taxes. Ahead of a few rich Jewish manufacturers stands a great proletarian mass, which feels truly glad when it can find ‘a stable income’ for itself in these factories.”*

He goes on to recount that he only visited one factory, whose owner truly strove to employ only Jewish workers. This was a factory making needles and sticks for umbrellas. Of the 220 workers, over 100 were Jews - men as well as women. The men earned between four and five roubles a week for an eleven and half hour workday. The girls [earned] from one rouble and eighty kopeks to two and a half roubles a week. The very skilled even earned three roubles a week. He saw several Jews among the workers, many of whom were former tavern-keepers. The girls were mostly employed in sorting and packaging. The work was divided thus, that the Jews performed the manual labour, while the Christians worked with the steam[-powered] machines.

Besides this, Jews were [also] employed in paper, celluloid, linen [and] jute factories. Landau recounts:

*“One factory owner showed me to a room in which 83 girls were pressing coloured paper, but there was not even one Jewess among them. It is also curious that this same man distinguishes himself precisely as a Jewish philanthropist and shows an interest in the training of Jews, such as in farming and craftsmanship.”*

In 1902, Khorosh, a Russian-Jewish economist, researched the financial situation of the Jews in Częstochowa. He determined that the Jews in Częstochowa had developed a lively and widespread production of playthings. The city was called “the Jewish Nürnberg” because, just as Nürnberg had acquired a reputation with its production of toys, so had Częstochowa which, already during the 1860's, had begun to manufacture “*zabawkes*<sup>22</sup>” [toys] for children.

Khorosh tells us that one Reb Szaja is considered the pioneer of this industry in Częstochowa. He was a lathe-turner by trade. At first, this religious Jew began manufacturing very artistically-worked souvenir medallions bearing the image of the “Holy Częstochowa Mother”. These medallions were so popular that, over time, they became collectors’ items on the part of different collectors. The demand on the part of the pilgrims to Częstochowa for these souvenir medallions became so great, that this gave the push forward to go over to more factory-scale forms of production. Jews – even the very religious ones - began manufacturing Catholic objects, which the crowd purchased willingly. The Catholic Church, however, could not tolerate this. An array of prohibitions was issued and the pious visitors to Częstochowa were warned not to buy these products. Śląsk craftsmen began filling the city with their products. Some of them were simply smuggled in and the Russian customs house was forced to vigorously combat this industrial invasion.

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<sup>22</sup> [TN: From the Polish “*zabawka*,” or toy.]

Even though the priests marvelled at “the glorious woodcarvings” by the Jewish craftsmen, and more than one connoisseur prided himself on his collection of these “devotional objects”, the Jews were forced to cease production.

As this same decree did not apply to the sale of Catholic icons and carvings, the commerce still remained in Jewish hands. In this manner, the Jews went over to making, first, wooden toys and, later, metal ones and others. In the 1880s and 1890s, many young Jewish men from Częstochowa travelled to Nürnberg, where they learned the trade of making inexpensive toys. Upon returning home, they began producing toys for children on a modest scale.

According to Khorosh’s estimate, the production of toys, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reached approximately 150,000 roubles a year. According to the later reports, in 1908, this production already reached over two million roubles a year. When we take into account that Częstochowa produced cheap items, this sum is very large.

In 1900, Częstochowa had fifteen factories making children’s toys. These factories employed 300 labourers. Four fifths of them were Jews. The owners of these factories were all Jewish. Many Jews worked from home, meaning that they worked for a contractor, who would provide the raw materials and the Jews were paid by the piece. But, in the majority of cases, these contractors were the agents of small contractors. As they did not yet have any machines, especially the smaller manufacturers, this was obviously manual labour. Men were seldom eager for such work. It is therefore understandable that girls made up a full sixty percent of these workers. Their wages were between eighty kopeks and two roubles and fifty kopeks a week.

In the factories, people were usually paid by the piece. A normal workday then meant between twelve and fourteen hours a day.

The Częstochowa members of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) took an interest in the situation of the Jewish workers. Their correspondents for the *Robotnik* [The Worker] and *Przedswit* [The Harbinger] (published in London) present a clear reflection of the situation in this industry. To what extent efforts were made to organise the workers on the part of this party is, sadly, unknown.

If, in the field of the toy industry, the Częstochowa Jews were pioneers in Poland, they were also very active in other areas. The manufacture of paper, wallpaper, buttons, soap, candles, matches, the five large frame factories - all this was a Jewish achievement. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the great mineral industry developed, which emerged thanks to the exploitation of the richness of the natural resources around Częstochowa. Large lime and brick factories are built, [and] later iron foundries, [and] metallurgy and textile industries. Large capitalist enterprises arose and, as a consequence of this, a solid strata of a well-established Jewish bourgeoisie. Great commerce developed surrounding this industry - shipping offices, commission brokerages and various intermediary agencies. The role of Częstochowa, as a transit-point between Russia and abroad, significantly raised the financial importance of this city.

A side-effect of the growth of the role of the Jews in Częstochowa’s financial life was a strong developing antisemitism. The trend towards Polonising commerce was very apparent precisely in Częstochowa, much earlier than in other cities. Already, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was agitation, during the procession of the pious pilgrims, to the effect that the visitors to Jasna Góra should not, Heaven forbid, buy from Jews, but [that it would be] better to support the Polish-Catholic merchant and shopkeeper. Also, amongst Polish labourers, a strong antisemitic sentiment began to be felt. A volcanic eruption of these feelings was the pogrom that took place in Częstochowa in August 1902. Various strata of the Polish populace participated in this pogrom. The

victims of the pogrom were actually mostly the poor - 120 shops were looted during the course of one hour. The Jews put up a resistance. Those who distinguished themselves, in particular, were the butchers, who defended ul. Targowa in such a manner that the pogrom bypassed it. They were forced to call in the military. Two people were killed and many were injured, among whom were also several Jews.

The Polish Socialist Party, which regarded Częstochowa as one of its strongest bastions, issued a proclamation denouncing the pogrom.

This pogrom upset Jewish-Polish communal relations. The effects of these events immediately began to be felt in Jewish life. It can be said that, since that event, the Częstochowa Jewish bourgeoisie, which had never spared money to support Polish artists and writers, began to show signs of a more active interest in Jewish communal life. Since then, Częstochowa had more than one case to report, in which children of deeply assimilated homes participated in Jewish affairs and even of a nationalistic character.

Until around 1899, the Jewish communal life in Częstochowa was very meagre. No Jewish institution whatsoever was active. The *Kehilla* itself functioned very weakly. The decisive opinion was in the hands of the assimilated Jews. They were always chosen as *dozores*<sup>23</sup>, because there was nobody better and, especially, because they were the ones willing to bear the financial burden to some extent.

At the time, the opportunity even arose to seek out a location for a cemetery and to build a *mikveh* [ritual bathhouse]. The city badly needed these two institutions. In 1899, a Jewish charitable society was founded with the Polish name "*Dobroczynność*" [Charity]. This society's first task was to build a Jewish hospital. The Jewish population had expanded [and] the number of Jewish doctors was large enough to staff a small hospital for ailing Jews.

By September 1900, this society had already purchased a plot upon which to build a hospital. But it emerged that this location was no good. Those, who had been involved in the matter, were left discouraged. The entire project did not progress at all. Only seven years later was the work renewed. In 1907, the old abattoir was relocated under [orders from] the city. The Hospital Commission began negotiations with the municipal authorities to the effect that the plot, adjacent to the abattoir, should be given over for the projected hospital.

In 1908, the Town Hall gave over this plot and building the hospital commenced. On 18<sup>th</sup> Sivan 5669 [7<sup>th</sup> June] (1909), with a huge parade, the cornerstone was officially laid.

The hospital cost 120,000 roubles. It had fifty beds and an annual budget was 30,000 roubles. Part of this sum was covered by *kehilla* taxes on part of the Częstochowa burghers. The income from this reached 6,000 roubles a year. The rest of the money came from contributions by the wealthier Jews and from the income from the patients.

The Polish press vigorously praised the organisation of the Jewish hospital in Częstochowa and pointed to it as a model of *kehilla* energy and organisation.

The Jewish hospital increased the prestige of the *Kehilla* in grand style. This same *kehilla* gradually organised an array of institutions which served as an example for other smaller *kehillas*. Besides the Crafts School, next to the Talmud Torah [public *cheder*], which was an achievement of the *Kehilla*, a *Hachnoset Orchim* [hostel for poor wayfarers] was built in the city, which numbered 740 supporting

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<sup>23</sup> [TN: From Pol. *dozór*; the official committee in charge of Jewish religious institutions.]

members. The Markusfeld family supported the *Kehilla's* most important institutions. Thus, for instance, in 1910, a trade school was built, named after Adolf and Ernestina Markusfeld - the parents of the wealthy Henryk Markusfeld. In order to maintain this school, which had a large staff of teachers, the Markusfeld family participated with large donations. Besides this, the *Kehilla* and also the *Jüdische Kolonizacja-Gesellschaft* (ICA [Jewish Colonisation Association]) provided large sums.

Apart from money, Markusfeld also donated a fine library to the school. This same Markusfeld [also] gave money to the Jewish "*Lira*" [a Hebrew choir] society. The festive inauguration of the "Henryk Markusfeld Library" took place in December 1912. I.L. Peretz was invited as the main speaker. In those times of the boycott movement, which was very strong in Częstochowa, it was very interesting to see how assimilated Jews clung onto the Jewish "*Lira*". Peretz delivered a fine lecture on the sense of Jewish history and elaborated on the idea that the Jews were not "guests" in Poland, but permanent citizens. This speech found great favour with Markusfeld. It warmed him greatly to this institution, which was a thoroughly Jewish-nationalistic one.

In 1901, the local Talmud Torah founded a horticultural farm. The ICA allocated 18,680 roubles for this purpose. The *Kehilla* would give 3,000 roubles annually. The farm had 17 *mórg*<sup>24</sup> of land. Its budget reached 10,000 roubles a year. This institution had such a good reputation that, in 1907, it received second prize at the Polish horticultural exhibition.

In 1907, the management board of the horticultural farm comprised H. Markusfeld, Leopold Werde (1862-1912), Markus Henig, J. [?] Nowinski, Stefan Grosman, Stanisław Herc, Dr L. Batawja and M. Frenkel.

Leopold Werde was very active in the Jewish charitable society and took great interest in Jewish education. The *Kehilla* maintained four primary schools - two for boys and two for girls. In 1910, over 300 children attended these schools. The *Kehilla* allocated 10,000 roubles annually to these schools. In addition, there were three Talmud Torahs, two of which had their own buildings. Sixty pupils learned in the craftsmen's workshops. Werde secretly covered a large part of the budget, which was far larger than the *Kehilla's* annual subsidy.

In the years 1909-1912, a series of societies and clubs emerged in Częstochowa. What are unfortunately little known is that, in many of these societies, passionate ideological struggles were played out. In a report about a session of the Jewish Society of Education, that was held in April 1907, we learn of a language struggle that took place there. They debated as to whether lectures in Yiddish and keeping Yiddish books in this society's library should be allowed. According to the report in the *Goniec Częstochowski* [Częstochowa Messenger], the majority expressed their [favour] for Yiddish. As a consequence, the anti-Yiddish members resigned from the society. According to that report, the main "jargonists"<sup>25</sup> were Kwiatek, Herc and Zygmunt Majorczyk. The latter, incidentally, was a follower of [I.L.] Peretz and a collector of Jewish folklore.

The most important of the practical societies was the *Gmiles Chassodim*<sup>26</sup> fund. It was partially supported by the ICA. Henryk Markusfeld was a member of the ICA Board of Directors and a relative of the famous banker Hippolyte Wawelberg, who was in charge of the ICA's funds in Russia and Poland. This was the reason why Częstochowa, in particular, found more favour in the eyes of those in charge of the ICA's moneys, than other Jewish *kehillas* in Poland.

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<sup>24</sup> [TN: An obsolete land measurement which varied slightly from region to region in Poland, being on average 0.57 of an hectare.]

<sup>25</sup> [TN: Those opposed to Yiddish viewed it not as a legitimate language, but as a mere dialect.]

<sup>26</sup> [TN: "Charitable loans," viz. a society that collects membership fees, which entitle the members to receive loans without interest.]

Jewish public life in Częstochowa developed beyond the *Kehilla* and did not even have much contact with the official representatives of the local Jewry. The *Kehilla's* numbness was, in large measure, the cause of the feeble public resonance which its activity had amongst the Jewish populace. Almost all the institutions, barring perhaps the hospital, were the product of the energy of individuals - in most cases, precisely by such people who did not even pay any *kehilla* taxes and, hence, had no say whatsoever in the management of the *Kehilla*. The communal basis of these institutions was a democratic one, which had nothing at all to do with the *dozores* [who ruled by] tenure. These were merchants, shopkeepers, skilled workers [and] craftsmen - people from diverse ideological directions, activists in various legal and illegal circles and societies. Częstochowa, in particular, distinguished itself amongst the Polish provincial cities with a lively social pulse. More than one theoretician of a new social method in Jewish political thought, precisely in Częstochowa, found his first ideological followers. There were parties in the Jewish street, whose main moral and material support came from Częstochowa.

Jewish life was reflected more in the "Lira" Society than, for instance, in the activity of the *Kehilla*. Within it, all factions in the Jewish street were represented. The most prominent writers and political activists held lectures in "Lira". [Even] under the conditions of the Tsarist regime, "Lira" managed to give expression to the ideological programmes of various parties. The high level of the discussions, which were conducted there, was even echoed in the Warsaw press.

Of all the provincial cities in Poland, Częstochowa - after Łódź - had [the most] luck with the national press. The detailed reports on the activity of the local Jewish hospital, which Polish medical journals printed, bore testimony to the high level of that institution.

The same can be said of the aged care home. The horticultural farm has already been mentioned earlier.

The conflict between the public and the *Kehilla* was an unavoidable one. The splintered communal energy needed the remedy of being concentrated. The moment was ripe for coordinating the activity of the different societies. The press pointed out the wastefulness of money precisely due to the fact that each institution had its own budget and management. A centralisation was required in Jewish public life. The war to democratise the *Kehilla*, that was under way at the time in Warsaw, [surely] must have had an influence on the *kehillas* in the provinces.

It is, therefore, no wonder that Częstochowa began mobilising for an attack to "smash the old fortress" of the *Kehilla*. The *Kehilla* was in the permanent grip of a few Jewish families, who did not wish to relinquish their control over the "*placówka*" [institution], as the *Izraelita* [newspaper] called the *Kehilla* [which], at the same time, was a card of power of the assimilationists.

The Jewish press in Warsaw wrote about this frequently and Częstochowa began the battle.

Częstochowa only began conducting this fight for the democratisation of the Jewish *Kehilla* in 1912. A social campaign of the entire community was required in connection with the emigration to Galveston which, precisely in Częstochowa where Territorialist sympathies were very strong, aroused such an interest - that many young people departed for Galveston.

The *Częstochower Tężeblatt* [Cz. Daily Newspaper], a very lively [and well-]edited newspaper, in fact began a campaign for the democratisation of the *Kehilla*.

The apathy regarding the *Kehilla* elections was so great that, in 1913, of the 1,200 *kehilla*-tax payers, only fourteen took part in the election. The Russian authorities were, of course, forced to invalidate these elections and set new ones.

That same year, Jewish Częstochowa began a campaign to build a community building for all the city's Jewish institutions. Even though this operation did not produce any tangible results at the time, nevertheless, the city's best communal forces had been mobilised. The assimilated Jews had been pulled into the stream of Jewish life to such an extent that, during the boycott campaign, a plan to publish a Polish-Jewish newspaper even emerged. The Werde and Markusfeld families were to have given the money and the editors were to have been the socialists Jakub Rozenberg and Dr Zaks. One of the Werdes (Leopold Werde, who died in 1912) was a respected public activist from the assimilationist camp.

That same year (1913), the Jewish Manufacturers and Merchants Union was founded.

In 1914, on the eve of the First World War, the Jewish press in Częstochowa began a fight for a Jewish public primary school. This struggle was supported by all the Jewish socialist parties and a considerable part of the Jewish *petite bourgeoisie*.

The *Kehilla* was already a partially reorganised institution with a large budget. Its capital reached half a million roubles. True, its main supporters were still the affluent strata, viz. the assimilationists. A democratic *kehilla* management, who should meet the demands of the Jewish populace, was then still a long way off.

That year, the *Kehilla* had 1,145 taxpayers, 900 of whom paid an average of 10 roubles a year - while 245 taxpayers brought in 25,800 roubles. In this manner, those who had the main say were the wealthy Jews, [who were] usually of an assimilationist leaning, even though, as mentioned already, with a much warmer interest in Jewish affairs than previously. Whilst in Częstochowa, there were "assimilationists" such as these, who built Jewish libraries, Warsaw, for example, did not have them.

The First World War broke out. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914, the Germans were already in Częstochowa. They began dragging Jews off to forced labour. Several Jews were even shot. A painful, grey and, to some extent, even bloody period in the lives of the Częstochowa Jews had begun.

The Jews in Częstochowa were heading towards an unknown tomorrow.

## 5. Rabbis, Scholars and Writers in Częstochowa

It has already been mentioned above that, until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Częstochowa did not have a Jewish *kehilla* and was factually a "*przykahatek*" of Janów. As a consequence, it also had no rabbi. In the period of the Duchy of Warsaw, it had rabbinical judges, but still no rabbi. It was apparently only in the times of Congress Poland (1815-1830) that Częstochowa had its first rabbi. In 1821, the *kehilla* was abolished throughout Poland and the Synagogue Supervision (*dozór bóżniczy*) was instituted [in its place]. This meant that they wanted to strip the *kehilla* of the powers of an organisation with autonomous functions and turn it into a management entity over the synagogues and other institutions which served the Jewish population. As consequence, there could also be no Chief Rabbi to represent the city's entire Jewish congregation. We may assume that there were, in Częstochowa, minor Halachic authorities. For important matters, people turned to the Rabbi of Piotrków.



In the book of responsa *Bris Avruhom* [The Covenant of Abraham] by the Rabbi of Piotrków<sup>27</sup>, one “Reb Duvid, Chief of Court in Częstochowa” is mentioned a few times. In all probability, the reference is to Reb Duvid-Icchok [Bromberg], author of the commentary on the Pentateuch entitled “*Beis Duvid*” [House of David], published in 5667 (1807) [sic 5666 (1906)], in which the author’s name appears as “[Rabbi Duvid-Icchok *ztz”l* son of Reb Gerszon *z”l*], Chief of Court of the Częstochowa *Kehilla* and Rabbi and Chief of Court of Piotrków<sup>28</sup>”. Reb Duvid-Icchok died in 5578 (1818). According to other sources, he died in 5581 (1821)<sup>29</sup>.

There is information, however, to the effect that the first Rabbi of Częstochowa was the prodigy Rabbi Isuchor Wajngort. But unfortunately, there are no details about him to be found.

Among the earlier scholars of Częstochowa, one “Reb Aryje of Częstochowa” is mentioned. In all probability, this Reb Aryje was a rabbinical judge in Częstochowa. An approbation by him is printed in the book *Maase Choishev* [Cunning Work], a commentary on the [Talmud] tractates *Buve Kamme* [Bava Kamma] and *Shvies* [Shevuot], written by Reb Josef son of Reb Mojsze Neumintz of Pilica. The book was printed in Lemberg [Lwów] in 5556 (1796). This Reb Aryje is one of the first known [Torah] scholars in the history of the Jews in Częstochowa.

Decades go by without our finding even the name of one rabbi in Częstochowa. This certainly does not mean that the city was without a rabbi, [but that] simply no materials have been preserved pertaining to this matter – apparently, they were no “great men of their generation”. They did not compile any works and all traces of them have, therefore, been completely lost. There is a lack of any biographical indication of them [and] no obituaries have been preserved - causing a lengthy span of time to not be registered for history.

It is only in around 1850 that the figure of a rabbi first arose in Częstochowa, who not only gained a reputation in his own city, but also in Poland and abroad. This was Rabbi Icchok Rabinowicz (1823-1868). Where he came from is unknown. All we know is that from, 1850 to 1868 – viz. to his death, he was the Rabbi of Częstochowa. It is also known that he visited Berlin and became acquainted with the rabbi, Dr Michael Sachs (1808-1864), the renowned interpreter of medieval Hebrew poetry and a German translator of the *Siddur* and *Machzor*<sup>30</sup>. Rabinowicz even corresponded with him. He was also acquainted with other German rabbis and preachers. Rabinowicz would purchase religious books in Prussia and hold scholarly discussions with these rabbis. This, however, does not mean that Rabinowicz was a follower of the German method. He was a pious rabbi in Poland, who had a connection with the German rabbis - and who did not view the *Haskala* as a peril to the foundations of Orthodox Judaism.

Rabinowicz was famed as a moralistic sermoniser. In 1863, his disciple and fanatic follower, Mojsze Majmon, wrote that Rabinowicz would often come to Warsaw and deliver sermons, which were very popular amongst the circles of scholarly *Misnagedim*<sup>31</sup> (*Jutrzenka*, 1863, 40).

When Rabinowicz died (in 1868), Szymon Feltyn<sup>32</sup> – a scholar himself, although a *maskil* – published a detailed obituary article in the weekly *Izraelita*. This apparently means that Feltyn knew the Rabbi of Częstochowa personally. His description is written with a great warmth.

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<sup>27</sup> [TN: Rabbi Abram-Cwi-Hersz Pacanowski, Chief of Court in Piotrków.]

<sup>28</sup> [TN: He would presumably have become Chief of Court in Piotrków after his term in Częstochowa.]

<sup>29</sup> [TN: According to the publisher’s introduction to the aforementioned book “*Beis Duvid*”, the inscription on Rabbi Duvid-Icchok’s headstone states that he died on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> Shvat, 5587 (25<sup>th</sup> February 1827) in Piotrków.]

<sup>30</sup> [TN: The Hebrew prayer books for all year round and the High Holidays, respectively.]

<sup>31</sup> [TN: Anti-Chassidic orthodox Jews who focus on strict morals and Talmudic casuistry, as opposed to the Chassidic emphasis on joy and seeking ultimate truth.]

<sup>32</sup> [TN: This surname is subsequently spelt once with a P – “Peltyń”; we have been unable to ascertain which of the spellings is correct, as both surnames exist.]

“He was the only rabbi in our country”, Feltyn wrote, “who merged true religiousness with free scientific thought. He was a great scholar in the realm of rabbinical literature and no small expert on worldly matters.”

Peltyn goes on to recount how difficult it was for Rabbi Icchok Rabinowicz to convince the *kehilla* that secular studies, by no means, stand in contradiction to religiosity and scholarliness. True, he was an ardent *Misnaged* and he fought passionately against Chassidism and its followers.

More than once, the *Chassidim* denounced him before the authorities, pointing to the fact that he was hand-in-hand with non-believers. But the Rabbi of Częstochowa was the personification of goodness, without spite [and] without vengeful feelings. He was a man with a profound sense of decency and was, generally, a most tolerant person.

His view was that one did not have to fear for the pious, for they would not become non-believers. However, his concern was for the non-believers lest they become “complete Gentiles”. Despite the fact that the Częstochowa *Kehilla* was in the hands of “enlightened” men of wealth, it nevertheless conducted itself in the manner their rabbi wished. He delivered his sermons in Yiddish. He categorically refused to allow even the smallest of reforms. The only [reform] that he instituted was the study of Polish (later Russian), mathematics and a little geography in the municipal Talmud Torahs.

His house was a meeting-house for the sages<sup>33</sup>. The scholars would gather and debate the newest research of the German Science of Judaism [*Wissenschaft des Judentums*]. More than one Jew heard from the Rabbi’s mouth, for the first time, the names of Yom-Tov Lipman Zunz, Michael Sachs and other scholars in Germany. He, himself, subscribed to the most important periodicals on the Science of Judaism.

Rabbi Icchok Rabinowicz’s most important sermons were published in 1863 in Berlin, entitled “*Nidvoys Pi*” [Offerings of My Mouth]. This selection of sermons and Halachic casuistry was received very warmly by the contemporary critics. Mojsze Majmon published a detailed review in the weekly *Jutrzenka*, which was published by Daniel Neufeld, the Rabbi’s friend. Generally, Neufeld thought very highly of the Rabbi of Częstochowa. In his eyes, he was a model for rabbis in Poland - pious and worldly at the same time.

In one article, Neufeld wrote that “the Rabbi of Częstochowa is renowned for his tolerance and sense of uprightness” (*Jutrzenka*, 1863, №4).

The second part of the sermons was published by the Rabbi’s son. They appeared in Warsaw in 1870.

Rabbi Icchok Rabinowicz’s sermons have not yet been used as a material by which to describe the spiritual status of a small community in those times. The allegories and illustrations that the Rabbi of Częstochowa brings in his sermons were taken from the local reality. They contain no exaggeration and also no strong moralistic tones. They are a direct appeal to common sense - a cautious criticism of those evil traits from which he wanted to distance with mild means. Questions of education are touched upon with particular frequency in these sermons. In one sermon, the Rabbi describes how a child in an opulent Jewish household in Częstochowa is educated. The sons go to the public schools, as was the custom in those circles. The Rabbi is of the opinion that, in the majority of cases, it was the woman who succeeded in having the children sent to these “*szkoły*” [schools]. The father was

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<sup>33</sup> [TN: Ref. to *Pirkei Avot*, Ch.1, mishna 4: “Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah said: Let thy house be a meeting-house for the Sages etc.”]

against it. When the child comes home from the “szkoła”, the mother is filled with joy, whilst the father goes about all over the house, spewing curses upon the “goyische” schools. In a different sermon, he describes an opposite case. The parents send the child to the Talmud Torah. But he comes home to find a spirit which is the opposite of what is taught in the Talmud Torah. Rabinowicz points out these contradictions and warns that such duplicity is a peril to the existence and wholeness of the Jewish family.

Besides this, the sermons contain snapshots of Jewish life in Częstochowa. Thus, for instance, the Rabbi describes, in one of his sermons, how in the well-to-do families of Częstochowa they never stop playing cards.

Apart from sermons, Rabbi Rabinowicz [also] wrote many letters. It has already been mentioned that he corresponded with Sachs, Zunz and Kirchheim. He also conducted correspondence with Polish *Maskilim* from Warsaw and Łódź. Unfortunately, many letters have been lost and only a few have been preserved. Thus, for example, the *Maskil* Josef Graf published two very interesting Hebrew letters, translated into Polish, which the Rabbi wrote to the *Maskil* Izidor Kempinski in Łódź (*Izraelita*, 1869, numbers 8 and 9).

These two long letters contain a great deal of interpretation, blended with psychological insight into the teachings of *Chaza”l*<sup>34</sup>. From them, one can see that Rabinowicz was well-versed in the Jewish homiletics that were blossoming at the time in Germany. At the same time, he is vigorously conservative and does not deviate from *Masorah*<sup>35</sup>.

His son, Juda Rabinowicz, on the other hand, was already more of a *Maskil* than a pious Jew, although he did have a reputation as a great [Torah] scholar. He died one year after his father’s death (in 1869), at the age of 24. A brother of his published the second part of their father’s sermons in 1870 in Warsaw, under the same title – “*Nidvoys Pi.*”

Between the years 1868-1878 [sic 1887], we do not hear of a rabbi in Częstochowa. Apparently, after such a synthesised [i.e. composite] figure as that of Rabbi Rabinowicz, it was not an easy thing to find a suitable rabbi capable of making both sides happy - the highly influential “enlightened ones” and the religious Jews, [who constituted] the majority [of the public].

From 1887 to 1894, Gerszon Rawinson was Rabbi of Częstochowa. In 1894, the rabbi Reb Nachum<sup>36</sup> Asz took his place.

The blossoming of the Częstochowa *Kehilla* falls within his era. The most important institutions were built during Asz’s term as rabbi. He had great influence on the *Kehilla* and was strongly supported by all Jews.

Besides the rabbis, there were also many [Talmudic] scholars in Częstochowa, who were famous throughout Poland - and some, even abroad.

Very often, the names of Częstochowa Jews are found in the lists of subscribers to various *Haskala* and religious books of that time. The surname Oppenheim, for example, is repeated very often. Three whole generations of this family appear in such lists from 1850 to 1907. In 1907, a book entitled “*Metsudas Ben-Tzion*” [Ben-Tzion’s Fortress] was published in Piotrków. Among the

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<sup>34</sup> [TN: Heb. acronym of “Our Sages of blessed memory,” viz. the sages of the Mishna and Talmud.]

<sup>35</sup> [TN: The body of tradition pertaining to the exact spelling, pronunciation, etc. of the Biblical text.]

<sup>36</sup> [TN: Nuchem in the official records, as his name is pronounced by Polish Jews.]

subscribers is one Oppenheim, whose grandfather appears in a book by a *Maskil* [named] Mandelsburg, which was published in Warsaw in 1850.

Częstochowa also had private scholars. Thus, for instance, as endorser of [the edition of] *Pirkei Uves* [*Pirkei Avot*, Ethics of the Fathers] that was printed in Krotoszyn in 1850, the scholar Reb Nechemie Landau of Częstochowa appears. He was the father of Bernard Landau, the industrialist and estate owner - one of the pillars of *Haskala* in Częstochowa.

Among the most important Częstochowa *Maskilim*, whose names appear very often in the lists of subscribers to Hebrew books, they following should be mentioned: Aba'le Landau, Ajzik-Szymon Ginsberg, Icek Glikson, Icek Frajman, Icek Winer, Abram Sztajnman, Gerszon Landau, Dawid Landau, Josef Szmidberg, Szaja Hajman, Josef Zand, Szaja Landau, Mordche Kon, Mojsze-Lajb Wajnberg, Nuta Rajcher and Fajgenblat.

Mojsze Majmon (1812-1874), too, although born in Działoszyce, regarded himself as a *Częstochower*, as he spent almost all of his life there. Majmon graduated from the Warsaw rabbinical seminary. He was a private Hebrew teacher. He wrote in the Polish-Jewish weeklies and published a great many articles in Polish and Hebrew. Some of these articles have value to this day, as materials on the Jewish lifestyle in an array of smaller communities in Poland.

Of the Jews in Częstochowa who wrote in Polish, we should mention Adam Wolberg, who wrote for the general Polish press and also the *Izraelita*. His work on the architecture of the wooden synagogues in Poland is of singular importance. In 1910, Wolberg caused a sensation with his polemic piece *I Blame the Polish Press*, in which he unmasked the degeneration of the Polish press, which only looked for sensations and demoralised society and led it astray from the path of political activity.

Two Częstochowa Jews wrote novels and stories in Polish. These were Edward Zaks and Maria Glikson. Zaks even wrote a novel about Jewish life. Glikson was close to the Polish Socialist Part and wrote under the pseudonym "Marian".

In 1926, the "last of the Mohicans" of the bygone Pleiades of Częstochowa *Maskilim* died in Częstochowa. This was Cwi Perla. He was born in 1841. In 1861, he took part in the patriotic demonstrations - for which he paid with several months in prison. He knew Polish and Hebrew very well and educated generations of Jewish youth in Częstochowa and later in Łódź.

During the time of independent Poland, the rabbi Dr Chaim-Ze'ev Hirsberg - a Jew from Ternopil - represented the Science of Judaism in Częstochowa. A good orientalist, he published an array of his works in various Polish and Hebrew periodicals. His political activity, however, did not make him popular. After Dr Majer Bałaban z"l, who was for a time headmaster of the local Jewish *gymnazjum*, left Częstochowa, Hirsberg continued carrying out the work of cataloguing the Hebrew books of the Częstochowa monastery, work which Bałaban had begun. The Kraków Academy of Science planned to publish a catalogue of the entire library (printed texts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) - but the Second World War tore this plan to shreds.

