

A Chrolobovsky

The Last Year

(The year 1939 in Częstochowa - a Brief Chronicle from the *Częstochower Zeitung*)

The shadow of Nazism was already hanging over the Jewish population like the *Sword of Damocles*. The “vanguards” of the storm of death were the refugees who arrived naked and barefoot in Zbąszyń, near Częstochowa.

In the article entitled *SOS* by M. Ruziewicz, in the *Częstochower Zeitung* dated Friday, 17th February 1939, the Jewish population is asked to support the refugees - a total of 130 souls - who “are standing on the edge of starvation and ruin, should a further, larger relief operation not be urgently organised”.

At a conference in the Merchants Union premises, where the public activists Bolesław Helman, lawyer M. Hasenfeld and M. Kopinski made appearances, measures were taken to save the existence of the Jewish Hospital, which found itself in a very critical situation.

An afternoon school was opened by the I.L. Peretz School, for the children of the public schools to study Yiddish, literature and history. Around fifty children were enrolled.

The Refugees Committee organised a show. They staged Leonid Andreyev’s *The Great Idea*.

On Sunday, 19th February and on Monday the 20th, two plays from Goldfaden’s repertoire were arranged at the firefighters’ hall - *Bar Kochba* and *Shulamis*. The leading actors were Liza Szlosberg and Dawid Zajderman.

The Knowledge and Progress Society arranged a lecture by Dr Axer on the subject *The Total War and the Aerial Defence of the Civilian Population*.

On Monday, 3rd March, the paper announces the death of Josef Szlezinger – a member of the Management Committee of the Merchants Union, *Achiezer*¹, the Jewish *Gymnazjum* and the Zionist Organisation.

At the City Council, the chairman of the *Endecja* club, R. Zarzecki, came out with an antisemitic declaration condemning the Jewish treason against the state and the people, and demanded that no Jewish aid be accepted in the protection of the country. Councillor Dr Arnold Bram came back at him.

Jakow Roziner, Secretary of the TOZ, in an article [entitled] *“Not One Grosz for Jewish Institutions”*, notes the sorrowful fact that the municipal authorities had struck off the sums for the *TOZ* and the Aged Care Home & Orphanage from its budget.

On Tuesday, 4th April, the 20th anniversary of the *Poalei Zion* Youth Union was celebrated.

At the premises of the *Ezra* [Aid] women’s association, on ul. Katedralna 11, clothes, linen, sugar, eggs and milk were distributed to the needy on 29th-31st March. One hundred and sixty-six families, mostly poor and sick, benefited from this *Peisach* campaign which *Ezra* had arranged.

¹ [TN: “Fraternal Aid” – a charitable society.]

In the streets, the Polish antisemites renewed their picketing of Jewish shops.

In the week of *Peisach*, two American “*staren*” (stars²) - Jenny Łowicz and Hymie Sztern - appeared in the operetta *The Rebbetzin’s Nights*.

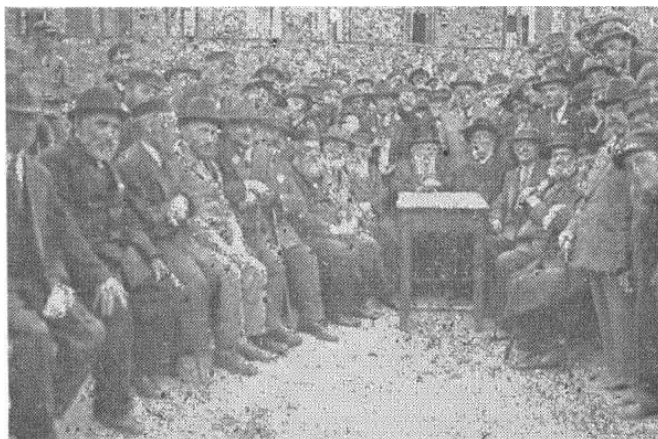
On Saturday night, 15th April, the choir of the Makabi Gymnastics-Sporting Association appeared in a concert, directed by the conductor Prof J. [?] Rozenwajn. Wolf Szmidt, a disciple of the cantor Birenbaum and a renowned singer, penned an expertly and warmly-written review of this concert.

On Saturday, 22nd April, at the Makabi Hall, the emissary from the Land of Israel, Leib Schneurson, spoke at a people’s meeting on the topic *Irgun Zvai Leumi* [the National Military Organisation - “*Etzel*”].

For the elections to the City Council, which were held in those days, a united Jewish bloc was formed. The Bund and the Retailers [Union] put submitted separate lists.

The sum, which the Częstochowa Jews contributed to the aerial defence loan³, reached 1,700,000 *złoty*.

On Tuesday, 9th May, a solemn memorial service was at Rabbi Nachum Asz’s graveside, marking his third *yuhrzeit* [death anniversary]. Mojsze Halter delivered the eulogy. The City Cantor, Cholewa, performed the memorial service and the choir, directed by the conductor Rotenberg, sang chapters from the Book of Psalms.



Laying the cornerstone for the new study-hall

On 27th and 28th May, the Częstochowa Morgensztern Sports Union celebrated its two-year anniversary.

On Saturday, 27th May, the *TOZ*’s general meeting was held. The function was opened by Dr Stefan Kohn. The memory of Zygmunt Markowicz, one of the most active members of the *TOZ* management committee, was honoured. The approved budget reached 122,000 *złoty*.

On Saturday and Sunday, 3rd and 4th June, at the Makabi Hall, two performances were given by the I.L. Peretz Kindergarten’s

drama circle, under the direction of Aron Perec. They performed on a whole series of scenes and sketches by M. Broderzon, M. Nadir, *Der Tunkeler*⁴, B. Szefner, Broda and others. Among others, Genia Berkowicz, Herszlikowicz, Testyler, Bornsztajn, Dymant, Orbach, Bornsztajn, Jaros, Działowski, Rubinsztajn [and] Gebirtig took part in the performance of the different numbers. The decorations were designed and painted by L. Kuszniur, with the aid of D. Rifsztajn. The review of these performances was written objectively, and with great talent, by M. Kaufman, formerly an apprentice and later a printer at Bocian’s printing press.

² [TN: In English in the original; the word “*staren*” does not exist in Yiddish, but is taken directly from the English. The Yiddish term for “stars” (*shtern*) is not used in ref. to entertainment artists.]

³ [TN: Most likely ref. to the loan of £60 million which Poland requested from Great Britain in 1939; in August, the latter acquiesced to loan £9 million.]

⁴ [TN: “*The Dark One*,” or Josef Tunkel.]

The *Częstochower Zeitung*, № 23 dated 9th June, reports [that] the annual gathering of the *Beis Lechem*⁵ was held at the New Synagogue. According to this report, the Society's women's section, together with the *TOZ*, were feeding 400 children every day at *Machzikei Ha'Das*⁶ and the municipal *Talmud Torah*. Those elected to the management committee were: J. Imich, M. Rozenchwajg, D. Dobrzynski, B. Rubin, D. Markowicz, N. Deres, J. [?] Sojka, J. [?] Monhajt, M. Epsztajn, M. Kozak, J. [?] Sztrozberg, J. [?] Kohn, A. [x] Winer, K. Rajcher, A. [x] Szumacher, Weltman, M. Jakubowicz, J.D. Potaszewicz, M. Goldsztajn, J. [?] Koplowicz, L. Jakubowicz, H. Zytnicki, A. [x] Gitler, Weksztajn and Ufner; Auditing Commission: B. Grylak, D. Win and Sz. Glewicki.

A meeting of the newly-elected Jewish councillors was held at the Craftsmen's Club. Communal affairs were discussed. Those who participated in the discussion included the councillors Goldberg, Koniecpoler, Adv. L. Asz, Adv. Markowicz, W. Żeryker, J. Rozenberg (President of the Jewish *Kehilla*), Dr Bram, Sz. Frank (editor of the *Częstochower Zeitung*), Wajs, Fajgenblat, A. Ickowicz, Prof Janowski, J. [?] Gerichter, Działowski, Gerszonowicz, Gryca, Kaufman, Epsztajn, Rotbard, Roziner and others. The President of the Craftsmen's Union, Dr Gajsler, chaired the meeting.

The children of the *Dobroczyńność ochronka* [nursery], on ul. Przemysłowa 6, arranged a performance in their own premises.

On Saturday, 10th June, at the large hall of the "Bałtyk" [Baltic] Cinema, Dr Józef Kruk delivered a lecture on the subject *The Land of Israel in the Year 1939*.

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 23rd June:

The Annual General Meeting of *Machzikei Ha'Das* was held. The President, Dr Krel, opened the event; Chairman was Isuchor Moszkowicz; in the presidium - Dawid Pelc [and] Abramcze Częstochowski; Secretary – Szyja Zeligman; the new Members of Management – Jechiel Landau, Menasze Margulies, Dawid Kohn and Herszl Wajnbaum.



Management Committee of *Tomchei Ani'im*

Edelist, Chaim Fajerman, Mendel Perlbril, Dawid Ginsberg, Wolf Garfinkel, Zyskind Gelber, Josef Haftka, Izrael Kiper, Mordche Krakauer, Szulim Lajzerowicz, Stefan Montag, Icchok-Hersz Majlich, Henia Nirenberg, Mendel Rotholc, Dawid Brauner [and] Dawid Hauptman.

In connection with the death of B. Bocian, the *Tomchei Ani'im* [Supporters of the Poor] Society (of which the deceased had been the president) held a memorial gathering, at which his memory was honoured.

The Jewish pupils at Dr Axer's *gymnazjum* held a theatrical performance. They put on the work *Antigone*⁷ from the ancient Greek literature.

The following Częstochowa pupils graduated from the Crafts School: Icchok Czarny, Mojsze Brokman, Pinches Edelist, Chaim Fajerman, Mendel Perlbril, Dawid Ginsberg, Wolf Garfinkel, Zyskind Gelber, Josef Haftka, Izrael Kiper, Mordche Krakauer, Szulim Lajzerowicz, Stefan Montag, Icchok-Hersz Majlich, Henia Nirenberg, Mendel Rotholc, Dawid Brauner [and] Dawid Hauptman.

A conference was held in the Jewish *Kehilla* premises, with the participation of the historian Dr E. Ringelblum, regarding the publication of a monograph on Jewish Częstochowa.

Dr Ludwik Batawja, who had been the chief physician at the Jewish Hospital since 1913 and chairman of an entire array of welfare and scientific societies in Częstochowa, died.

⁵ [TN: Heb., "House of Bread"; charitable society.]

⁶ [TN: "Upholders of Religion"; a public cheder.]

⁷ [TN: Play by Sophocles.]

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 30th June:

The festive graduation ceremony of the I.L. Peretz Kindergarten and the afternoon Yiddish courses was held. The ceremony was opened by Aron Perec. Reports were delivered by Abram Bratt and the schoolmistress Jacheles. The congratulations were extended by A. Brum, Sz. Frank, Mlodinow, Miss Berkowicz, Ch. Kaufman and others. Seventy-two children graduated from the two divisions of the afternoon school. The children performed songs and recitals. At the end, a small banquet was held for the children. The three schoolmistresses, Jacheles, J. [?] Guterman and S. Ginzberg, were presented with flowers.

The № 13 public school for Jewish children, headed by Miss N. Szacher, received an award for their work for the Red Cross.

The Polish film *Shadows Over Europe*⁸ was shown at the *Luna* Cinema.

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 14th July:

The annual general meeting of the Charitable Loans Fund was held at their own premises, at ul. Piłsudskiego 31. It was chaired by Mr Gryn and co-chaired by Szumacher and A. Rubiński; Secretary – Haftka. The memories of the two deceased Members of the Management Committee, B. Bocian and B. Sojka, were honoured. Adv. Goldberg, Szumacher, Gryn, Warmund and Szajnweksler were elected to the Committee of Management.



Public school for Jewish children headed by Miss Szacher

A gathering of the *Ahavas Achim* [Brotherly Love] charitable loans fund was held. To the Management Committee were elected: Chaim Wajnholc, Chaim Lancman, Chaim-Icchok Pacanowski, Abram Grynszpan, Jakow Rozenberg, Majer Szmulewicz and Josef Zajdman; Representatives – Ajzensztajn, Fajer, Frank and Przedborski; in the Auditing Committee - Zynger, Kolin and Szternberg.

The film *Without a Home*, [adapted from the stage play] by Jacob Gordin, debuted at the *Eden*

Cinema. This film featured the actors Ida Kamińska, Dzigana and Szumacher.

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 21st July:

In his weekly column, *What did [I] Hear, What did [I] See [?]*, Levitan (Lewensztajn) extensively praises the *TOZ* summer camps, where there were 180 children from the poorest households and in the greatest need. Mordche Kaufman, also, in his article *Land of Children*, praises the effect of the camps on the children. The *TOZ*'s summer camps, which in 1939 were conducted jointly with *Dobroczytność*, took place in Mstów, Przyrów, Chrzastów, Janów, Olsztyn, Kłobuck, Krzepice and Blachownia.

⁸ [TN: Silent film release by Pathéscope, August 1939; original title – “Ombres Sur L'Europe.”]

The Yiddish film *The Dybbuk* was shown at the *Bałyk* Cinema.

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 28th July:

A memorial service was held at the tomb of the deceased activist of the Craftsmen's Union, Daniel Działowicz, on his *yuhrzeit*, and his gravestone was unveiled.

Following the great heat, there was a flood in Częstochowa. The Warta and the Kucelinka [Rivers] burst their banks and the neighbourhoods of Zawodzie, the market on ul. Narutowicza and Stradom were flooded. The cellars and first [sic ground] floors of the buildings were soaked through.

The same happened in Krzepice, where the *TOZ* was running a summer camp. The teaching staff heroically saved the children from the flood.

The American actors Pejsachke Bursztajn and Lillian Luks performed two plays at the Firefighters' Hall – *The Comedian* and *His Fine Dream*.

The Yiddish film *The Cantor's Son*, with Mojsze Oszer, was shown at the *Eden* Cinema.

In the *Częstochower Zeitung* of 25th August:

The *Machzikei Ha'Das* public *cheder* undertook a campaign to protect the institution from being auctioned off due to debts.

In the *TOZ* summer camp in Blachownia and in the day camp in Częstochowa, the end of the summer season was celebrated with a children's performance. The leader of this camp was L. Brener.

Some contributors to the Yiddish press in Częstochowa (to the article "Yiddish Press"):



J. Rozenberg



Sz. Frank



M. Asz



I. Pejsachson