



[To the Everlasting Memory of Those Who Have Gone to Their Eternal Repose]

The listing, which we present here, includes only a small number of the individuals who led the communal work in our city and who deserve for their names to shine in the history of Jewish Częstochowa.

Alter, Michał & Cesia - Michał Alter, a member of the SS [Party] from his earliest years though to his older years - did not know Yiddish. He was a practical activist and a planner for the party.



Michał Alter



Hanke'le Alter



Cesia Alter

Cesia Federman, whom he married in the years after the First World War, was employed in Neufeld's office. She was distinguished for her modesty and her aristocratic, rarely unique features.

Michał Alter, Cesia and their child, Hanke'le, perished in the years 1939-1945.

Bocian, Dow-Ber - Berl Bocian was born in Częstochowa in 1877. In 1898, together with his father, Reb Mojsze Bocian, he founded the Yiddish printing house at Aleja 6. Following his father's death, he ran the press in partnership with his brother, the typesetter and printer Szymon Bocian.

Berl Bocian was a committee of management member of several Jewish communal institutions and the publisher of the *Częstochower Tageblatt* and the *Częstochower Zeitung*.

He died on 23rd Sivan 5699 [10th June 1939] at the age of sixty-two.

Birenbaum, Abram-Ber - Abram-Ber Birenbaum was born on the third day of Shvat [30th January] 1865 [5625] in Pułtusk (Poland), into the pious family of a *Kotzker chassid*¹ - a scholarly Jew.

Abram-Ber studied in *cheders* to the age of twelve, and afterwards in study-halls. At the age of seventeen, his father married him off. He was one of the great singers at the *Rebbe's*² table, but he devoted his soul to music. This did not please his father-in-law and a divorce was arranged. At the age of nineteen, Birenbaum married for a second time.



Abram-Ber Birenbaum and his family

In 1890, he became cantor and ritual slaughterer in Przasnysz [Płock gubernia]. In 1893, he discarded ritual slaughter and accepted the invitation to become Chief Cantor at Częstochowa's newly-built synagogue [the "German *Shule*"]. Here, a new world was revealed to Birenbaum. He applied himself seriously to music and began to pen articles about music in Hebrew and German.

In 1906, he opened a cantorial school in Częstochowa, where he endeavoured to unite

¹ [TN: Follower of Rebbe Menachem-Mendel Morgensztern of Kock (1787-1859).]

² [TN: This is presumably the second Grand Rabbi of Kock, Rebbe Duwid Morgensztern, who succeeded his father.]

cantorial singing with worldly musical education. This cantorial school drew dozens of cantors and, later, great opera singers. It was famed throughout Poland and Russia. After serving as cantor for thirteen years, he also became a preacher at the German *Shule*.

In 1913, he resigned from his position as Częstochowa Chief Cantor and settled in Łódź. When he came to Częstochowa on a business visit, he suddenly fell ill to a marrow inflammation³ and died on Friday, 22nd November 1922 at the age of fifty-eight.

Birencwajg, Machel – Machel Birencwajg was born in 1907 as his parents' youngest son. He received a religious, Jewish education in a *cheder* and, afterwards, at the Jewish Gimnazjum, where he became disillusioned with the Zionist movement and joined the illegal Communist Party.

Under the bloody rule of the Nazis, Machel and his brother Pinches were employed by the Germans as upholsterers. A *Möbellager*⁴ was set up in Wajnberg's factory.

The most sorrowful day for the Jewish community in Częstochowa arrives - 22nd September 1942. Ukrainians and Nazis are posted throughout the streets. The way to the *Sammelplatz* [assembly point] passes through a gate and [sic in] the *Möbellager*, where a German guard is stationed. At a certain moment, Birencwajg manages to divert the attention of the manager and of the guard, and a stream of chased and tortured Jews surges into the *Möbellager*. Their numbers already reach six hundred.



Machel Birencwajg

This was one of the most difficult tasks to be carried out under the noses of the Germans and the two Jewish spies, "*Kulebyaka*"⁵ and Gnat⁶ – who had been sent in specially by the Gestapo. It is only

thanks to Machel Birencwajg's resoluteness and nerves of steel that this was possible.

This is what Jakow Pat wrote about him when he described the annihilation of the Jewish populace:

"The clandestine combat organisation, under the leadership of the heroic Machel Birencwajg, also transported wardrobes, cupboards and chests – but, inside them, lay Jewish mothers with children, who were smuggled out under the noses of the Germans. They were taken to previously-arranged underground bunkers. A few of these children are now in the children's homes."

On 8th July 1943, the *Möbellager* was raided by the German Częstochowa hangman Degenhardt and a band of gendarmes. Birencwajg was ordered to gather all his family - viz. his mother, brother and wife. It immediately became clear to him that the *Angel of Death* was standing before his eyes. Notwithstanding this, he wriggled his way out and fled over a fence. His seventy-two-year-old mother was shot on the spot. Machel Birencwajg hid with "respectable" Poles - who constantly blackmailed him and, eventually, turned him over into the hands of the executioners. He was taken to prison broken and battered. He no longer had the will to flee. On 28th July, at the Jewish cemetery, he was shot along with sixty other Jews.

Berkowicz, Lajbisz – Lajbel Berkowicz was one of the young generation of Jewish labourers, who were awoken by the 1905 freedom movement to fight for a new and healthy Jewish life. All his life, he served the ideal of the SS (Socialist Territorialism). He married Jentla Śliwińska.



Genia Berkowicz



Lajbisz Berkowicz

The five children who they raised - Róża, Szymson, Dalia, Genia and Motusz - were among the first beauties, singers and actors of the I.L. Peretz

³ [TN: According to his detailed biography in *Sefer Częstochowa* Vol. I, he suffered a stroke while on a visit to his daughter in Częstochowa.]

⁴ [TN: Ger., furniture camp; viz. storage facility for the furniture plundered from the local Jewish houses.]

⁵ [TN: Aka "*Coulibiac*", a traditional Russian fish pie; nickname of Mordche (Makel) Herman.]

⁶ [TN: Polish Jewish surname.]

kindergarten and primary school, of which Lajbisz and Jentla Berkowicz were among the founders.

Lajbisz and Jentla Berkowicz, along with their daughter Róża and her child, as well as Szymson, perished in Nazi times. The ones who are left are Genia (currently a teacher at the I.L. Peretz School) and her husband and Motusz.

Berkowicz, Lajzer – The “*Rebbe*” whom he followed was Raphael Federman. He started together with him in the SDKPiL, switched over to the SS, took part in the choirs of the Jewish Literary Society and the *Lira* and, afterwards, went on into the Vereinigte Party. He was a gaiter-stitcher and, for many years, worked in Działowski’s workshop, after which he ran his own workshop on the Second Aleja. There is no trace left of him and his wife, from Nowo Radomsko, and their children.

Batawja, Dr [Ludwig] & Kohn-Kolin, Dr [Stefan] – Besides their activity in an entire array of charitable and communal institutions, they especially distinguished themselves in their running of the Jewish Hospital. It should be noted that the development of the hospital was aided extensively by Dr Mikulski, a Christian.

Bratt, Abram – Silent, restrained and always shut within himself, Abram Bratt began his communal career practically as a child - during the First World War, in the bureau of the SS Organisation at Aleja 43. Later, he became the accountant of the great Vereinigte “kingdom” in Częstochowa, the administrator of [the newspaper] *Dos Naye Wort* [The New Word] and [held] dozens of other administrative positions in various institutions.

In 1924, he married Comrade Róża Plawner.

In 1926, he took over the leadership of the I.L. Peretz kindergarten and primary school - a privilege to which very few people were destined, but also a heavy yoke and a superhuman effort under the circumstances of party rivalry from within and the fascist reaction from without.

Under the rule of the Nazis, together with Wolf Fajga, he continued watching over the I.L. Peretz building, which served as a shelter for the refugees from Łódź and Płock. During the first years of the Second World War, letters still arrived from him. In one of his letters, he informed [us] that he had lost his home, along with the furniture and clothes. The Nazis had taken everything from him and imprisoned him, together with thousands of other in the ghetto.



Abram Bratt



A. and R. Bratt's daughter



Róża Bratt-Plawner

Shortly afterwards, he and his wife and daughter - then already sixteen years old - walked the path of the millions of Jewish martyrs.

Brom, Dr Arnold – Longstanding chairman of the Zionist Organisation in Częstochowa. He was a member of the *Kehilla* committee of management and a councillor on the [Częstochowa] City Council.

Gotajner, Herszl – His main trait was inquisitiveness. He started as a pupil in the local business school, with the blue-striped cap. At the time, he belonged to the SS [Party's] group of semi-intellectuals. He later studied in Kraków. During these years of cultural activity, in the streets of Częstochowa, on walks down the *Aleje*, he philosophised at length on Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel and Spinoza. He married Miss Rajcher and ran his own business. He was a unique man with a strong character, over whom it was difficult to triumph in a discussion regarding social issues. He is no longer among the living.

Gajsler, Dr Hipolit – Dr Gajsler devoted his communal activity mainly to Jewish craftsmen and, for many years, he headed the Craftsmen's Club.

Goldsztajn, Szmul – Already in 1914, Szmul Goldsztajn appeared as the first of the candidates to be representatives on the Jewish *Kehilla*, in the list that was put forth against the assimilationists.

During the First World War, he became president of the Jewish *Kehilla* and held this office for a long time.

Under the Nazi occupation, he was in Warsaw in 1940, after which he returned to Częstochowa, where he was annihilated by the Nazi murderers in Treblinka.

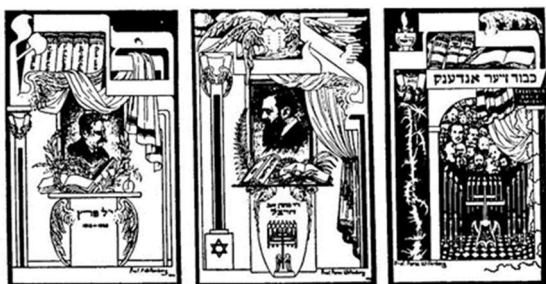
Gelber, Majer – Son of Chaim-Hersz and Rojza.



Majer Gelber

Born in 1890. He shared the fate of the martyrs in the years 1939-1945.

Willenberg, Perec – Perec Willenberg was famed in Częstochowa as an artistic painter. With several of his paintings, he gained a reputation and recognition throughout the whole of Poland. He was a master draughtsman, ran an art school in his home and was teacher of draughtsmanship at the Crafts School, the Jewish Gimnazjum and the I.L. Peretz primary school.



Drawings by P. Willenberg in the unique Jewish style, dedicated to the [memory of] the Jewish martyrs and personalities

During Nazi rule, he was in Warsaw, passing himself off as deaf-and-dumb so as to not be betrayed by the way he spoke Polish. Following Hitler's defeat, he lived in Łódź, where he died on 17th February 1947 at the age of seventy-three.

Wajnsztok, Chaim; Epszajn, Adolf & Filipowicz, Dawid ran the Retailers Union and devoted a great

deal of time and energy to support the Jewish market stallholders and small merchants.

Zarnowiecki, Jakow-Icek – His whole life was labour and need, from the earliest years of his life to his martyr's death.

He began as a toy worker and common soldier in the ranks of the SS [Party] in the years 1904/05. He did not abandon his party during the reactionary years. During the First World War he was a railway worker. It was then that he married Dorka Szacher.

He was "liberated" from his work along with the liberation of Poland, and he was the secretary of the Central Bureau - the central council - of the professional unions, and he was in charge of a great number of professional unions.

Financially, however, he struggled and suffered necessity. He became the father of two children, and the dearth increased. When the Częstochowa municipal administration began operating an omnibus line between Raków and the city, he was - as if by miracle - the only Jewish conductor among the *judenrein*⁷ municipal employees. He was almost the only one in Częstochowa, along with Dr Kruk, to go over to the Poalei Zion. His martyr's death is described in the reports on the destruction of Częstochowa⁸.

So lived and perished a quiet and humble man of the people.

Zajdman, Prędkie & Kaufman were the leaders of the left-wing *Poalei Zion*.

Fogel, Mendel, & Krel, Icek-Majer were Aguda activists. The latter was also councillor on the Częstochowa City Council.

Koniarski, Adv. Mendel; Żeryker, William & Dr Asz (a son of the Rabbi Reb Nachum Asz) distinguished themselves with their activity for the benefit of Częstochowa's Jews. Dr Asz was also the founder and, for many years, the chairman of Makabi.

Koblentz, Rabbi Josef-Szymon z''l – Josef-Szymon Koblentz was one of the rarest types of religious Jews whom Częstochowa possessed. In his youth, he joined the Hovevei Zion⁹ movement and, being a talented preacher and a great sage, his renowned

⁷ [TN: Ger. "clean of Jews"; loanword from the Nazi lexicon.]

⁸ [TN: See above, p.207, in Abram Izbicki's testimony.]

⁹ [TN: Heb., "Lovers of Zion"; Odessa-based council, whose official name was "The Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and the Land of Israel", as mentioned in his biography in *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. I.]

sermons - especially those on the Land of Israel - drew a large number of listeners.

Over the course of the forty-five years that he lived in Częstochowa, he was active in a great number of communal and religious organisations. He died in November 1937 (Kislev 5698). His death caused deep sorrow in Jewish Częstochowa. Thousands of people took part in his funeral.

The *Va'ad Ha'Mizrachi* [Mizrachi Council] in Częstochowa decided to commemorate the name of Josef-Szymon Koblenz in the Golden Book of Keren Kayemeth Le'Israel.

Rozenberg, Jakub – Jakub Rozenberg came to Częstochowa from Warsaw in 1912 and immediately became active – at first in the Jewish Literary Society and later in the *Lira*. He actively participated in and supported all Jewish cultural and communal institutions, and was one of the founders of the *gimnazjum* under the directorship of Dr Axer. He helped create the Medem Library and fought for Yiddish and for the rights of the Jewish masses and their own institutions during the time of the assimilationist rule [over the Kehilla].

As longstanding president of the Jewish Kehilla, he earned the affection and recognition of all echelons of the Jewish population in Częstochowa.

Jakub Rozenberg died during the horrific years of the Nazi occupation. No trace has remained of his family (his wife and their only daughter).

Fajga, Wolf – He was a worker in Fajga's candle factory. He dedicated all his free time to the party and the professional movement. Apart from that, he also found the time to help establish a library in Żarki and to take part in the management committees of the schools. In 1938, when the "Independents" were liquidated, he joined the Bund. He and his wife perished. His son was saved, and he is in a [DP] camp in Germany.

Markusfeld, Henryk – There is probably no other name as strongly connected to the industrial development of Częstochowa as the name Markusfeld.

The brothers Henryk and Dr Józef Markusfeld continued, developed and widened the work that their father, Adolf Markusfeld, had begun in the industrial, communal and philanthropic fields.

The Crafts School in Częstochowa was built at the initiative and with the means of the brothers

Henryk and Józef Markusfeld, in memory of their parents, Adolf and Astina [sic. Ernestina]. The Horticultural Farm and an entire array of other philanthropic institutions were [also] founded with their participation. Of the two brothers, the eldest - Henryk - was the one who distinguished himself the most with his communal-mindedness.



Henryk Markusfeld

There was almost no communal institution in Częstochowa where he was not honorary president, chairman or member of the management committee.

In his free evenings, he would spend time at the *Lira*. He would often stand by the warm cooker, surrounded by a group of "Lirists". He would deliver pearls of wisdom and, sometimes, also rebukes to the extremist "Yiddishists". But more so than by the cooker, he would warm himself in the *Lira* by the fire of the youth.

His multiple obligations and occupations never kept him from taking part in the meetings of the management committees of dozens of institutions. He seldom missed a meeting.

Once, he was late for a meeting at the *Lira*. He apologised, saying that he had arrived directly on the courier [viz. passenger train] from Breslau [Wrocław]. "I feel better amongst you than amongst the Germans", he added.

His authority and aid extended to an entire array of Jewish cultural and professional institutions, which were always financially shaky. He paid the rent and covered the deficits of their undertakings. "What is it I hear about money for the rent?", he would ask the dentist Aron Perec, Chairman of the *Lira*. "Come into my [office] tomorrow."

When Henryk Markusfeld died, all Częstochowa mourned him and gave him the greatest funeral a man has ever had.

Nirenberg, Szyja – The Nirenbergs were known for their stationery shop on the Second Aleja. Their two sons - Henech and Szyja - were members of the SS [Party]. Szyja Nirenberg made his appearance in the communal arena in the first elections to the Częstochowa City Council during the German occupation in 1917. He was then elected, along with three others, in the SS list in the 6th curia. He was once more elected city councillor in “Free” Poland - and his public appearances with “hard facts”, against the antisemitic leaders of the City Council, afforded them no great delight. Notwithstanding this, he was later the only Jewish employee in Town Hall.

Also of him, his wife and their only son Moniek – no trace has remained.

Nemirowski, Szmul – One of the most energetic activists in the period following the First World War: Chairman of *Hachnuses Orchim* [Hospitality to Guests], co-founder of Makabi, Chairman of the Revisionist Party and activist of many other institutions. He perished during the Nazi period.

Erlich, Hersze'le – He was the quiet dreamer...of Kamyk, of his little *shtetl*. His life's dream was to see Kamyk “revived”, working and progressive. His greatest achievement - the kindergarten and primary school in Kamyk.

He was a member of the SS [Party], the Vereinigte and the Freeland [League]. Just as silent and close-mouthed as he was, so were his ambitions - to do something for his Kamyk and to help in the editing of *Dos Naye Wort* in Częstochowa. It was the same when he was in Warsaw.



Hersze'le Erlich

In Warsaw, he married, had a child and lived in horrifying poverty in some corner of a kitchen. He endured hunger with his wife and child, but all that

he had left - a little time - he dedicated to others. He perished in the years 1939-1945.

Rotbard, Zelig & Cesia ([née] Szajn) - Zelig Rotbard, a son of Icze-Ber and Szprynca [née Zelkowicz], who ran a leather business at Stary Rynek [Old Market] 23, was a well-known name in Częstochowa. In his very early years, he belonged to the Social Democratic Party (SDKPiL). He later joined as an



active member in the Jewish Literary Society, where he met Cesia Szajn and married her. They raised two daughters - the eldest, Lola (Laja) and the younger, Sela (Fajgla).

Zelig Rotbard

Under Nazi rule, Zelig Rotbard belonged to the Judenrat and, along with his wife and their younger daughter, perished as part of the group of Jews who were taken out, on Purim, to the cemetery and murdered there.

In 1940, his elder daughter married Henry (Henech) Helman. Both of them were saved and they currently live in New York.

Richter, Dawid – In the revolutionary world of pre-war Poland, Dawid Richter occupied one of the most important places at the Eastern Wall¹⁰ of the movement.

A native of Częstochowa, he was fluent in Polish (he was active as a columnist and editor in the Polish proletarian press also) - but he was, nevertheless, intensely drawn to Yiddish, to Yiddish culture and to Yiddish revolutionary work. He came from the old Polish Social Democratic Party (SDKPiL) and, together with the party's best elements, he flowed into the Communist movement in Poland. Moreover, he came from the SDKPiL, where the assimilationist and national-nihilistic tendencies were large enough. Nevertheless, within the

¹⁰ [TN: Figurative; in European synagogues, the eastern wall facing Jerusalem is considered the most honoured place, and only the most respected members of the congregation sit there.]

Communist movement, he immediately applied himself to Jewish work. Dawid Richter remained loyal to this work to the [very] end.

Dawid Richter shone as a splendid columnist, as a fundamental and uniquely keen logical polemist, and as a fine writer of feuilletons and a theatrical critic, tasteful and measured.

His serious publicist works in the *Literary Tribune* [Literary Tribune], his hypothetical feuilletons (under the pseudonym "L. Chankes"), his brilliant articles in *Frajnd* [Friend] (under the name "D. Lajbin"), his brochures and his literary works - placed him out in the foremost rows of Jewish journalism.

Dawid Richter possessed a unique style - a lightness of the quill and an elegance in writing. He was fond of wordplay and loathed just pretty prose - he always argued logically and tactfully.

The years of imprisonment in pre-war Poland, the constant bitter worries of livelihood and the restless life did not make him cross, acrimonious or heavy-hearted. He always had a joke or a witticism on his lips. He was always cheerful and had time to discuss the latest forms in the art of painting or an interesting theatrical performance. This was a man with *joie de vivre*, who loved life and loved friends.

In Białystok, in 1940, he was editor of the Yiddish newspaper *Białystoker Sztetn* [B. Star] and dedicated himself to communal and literary work. He perished in the Słonim massacre in 1941.

Szlezinger¹¹, Dudek – He was the son of wealthy parents. They owned a large building and a ribbon factory on ul. Spadek. He studied in Belgium to become an engineer, but failed to complete his studies. He began his communal activity during the First World War. Alongside Józek Finkelsztajn, he led the Worker's Council. His energy gushed incessantly, like fiery lava in all the activities of the Vereinigte and, later, of the Independent [Socialists].

Inside this party, he became acquainted with Regina Gross - a natural beauty, who had grown up in the cellar of the house on the corner of Spadek and Ogrodowa [viz. a slum], and he married her. In the days of Nazi rule, they attempted to save their only child by giving the infant over to a Christian acquaintance, who denounced them. The Gestapo brought the child [back] to their house and

murdered it before the father and mother's eyes. Both of them - Dudek and Regina - were annihilated together with all the Częstochowa martyrs.

Szlezinger, Dawid; Sztyller, Zygmunt; Borzykowski, Dawid; the Dikman brothers and Neufeld, Moryc – distinguished themselves in the work of the Manufacturers and Merchants Union. Moryc Neufeld, formerly an assimilationist, also distinguished himself for his passionate public appearances against the *Endecja* members on the City Council.

Szapiro, Feliks - Initially, he was one of the leaders of the commercial employees and, later, a Zionist activist and a councillor in the magistracy [i.e., Town Hall]. He stood out particularly for his fight against antisemitism in the City Council.

Weksler, Chaim – A Mizrachi activist. He was president of the Kehilla and, for many years, councillor on the Częstochowa City Council. He was loved in the city as a kind-hearted man and a philanthropist.

Sztarke, Mrs Salomea – The aged-care and orphanage building, named in honour of Mina Werde, was one of the most popular institutions in Częstochowa - and Mrs Salomea Sztarke, with her rare energy, bore the yoke of maintaining these institutions, almost on her own, over the course of twenty-odd years. For the institution, she managed to obtain a certain subsidy from the municipal authorities, 2,000 złoty per month from the Jewish Kehilla and aroused more interest on the part of Dobroczytność [Charity (Society)]. This made it possible to create a kitchen for the orphans and the elderly. In 1928, a new storey was added to the old building. The number of elderly people and orphans in the building began to grow. A staff of teachers for the children was engaged.



Salomea Sztarke

Representatives of Częstochowa's Jewish community expressed their acknowledgement and gratitude to Mrs Salomea Sztarke. She perished in the years 1939-1945.

¹¹ [TN: Also spelt Szlezynwier.]