

## The “Bund” in Częstochowa in the Years Following the Second World War

### 1



In this current book, *Czenstochov*, is concluded the monograph of the city **Częstochowa**, whose foundation dates from the year 1760. The authors, Liber Brener and Benjamin Orenstein, sum up in this book the nearly 300 years of Jewish life in Częstochowa which, at the present, is flickering and is about to vanish completely.

It has fallen to my bitter lot to pen the last pages of a movement, which actively contributed to the development and strengthening of a Jewish community in a city, which numbered, at the outbreak of the Second World War, more than 30,000 [Jewish] souls.

The first sprouting of a Jewish Workers' Movement in Częstochowa showed itself in 1902. Amongst other Jewish parties, which began operating in Jewish life that same year in Częstochowa, the Bund also appeared upon the political arena.

Regarding the activity, functioning, life and struggle of the Bund, of its builders and of its fighters, from 1902 until after the destruction of Poland, the future historian will find detailed writings in the book *Czenstochover Yidn*, published by the United Czenstochover Relief Committee and Ladies Auxiliary in New York in 1947, under the editorship of Dr Rafael Mahler, Alkona Chrobolovsky, Raphael Federman, Aba Kaufman, and Wolf Gliksman.

J.Sz.Herc wrote, in detail, about the foundation of the Bund in Częstochowa [and] its political activity in the Jewish Professionals Movement. Chaja Waga-Rotman, A. Chrobolovsky, and R. Federman wrote about the Jewish press in Częstochowa, the Jewish Workers' Y.L. Peretz day-care centres, and the sports movement. The book *Czenstochover Yidn* contains an abundance of articles on the role which the Bund and its members played in the renowned Częstochowa Literary Association, in *Lira* [a Jewish literary society] and in the Częstochowa Jewish cooperatives – written by A. Chrobolovsky and P. Szmulewicz. Also, in the article *Jewish Theatre in Częstochowa*, composed by W. Gliksman, A. Chrobolovsky, and R. Federman, we learn of the workings of the Bund for the betterment of the Jewish Word in general and, in particular, of the battle which the Bundists waged continually against the assimilationists in the city and the questions of Yiddish and Jewish culture. A picture of Jewish Częstochowa and the Bund's role in that, the reader will, we believe, also be able to find in the *Memories of My Life*, by the writer of these lines. Such is also the case in the articles by L. Brener and M. Kuszniir.

From all the aforementioned articles and historical treatises, the Bund and its active members emerge as a lighthouse in the Częstochowa Jewish settlement. This same lively, Jewish settlement, to the great sorrow of all, together with all the ramified Jewish settlements in Poland, was cruelly annihilated, wiped out, physically and spiritually, by dark Nazism, during the years of the Second World War.

A monograph of the Bund in Częstochowa, however, would not be complete, unless we also provide a picture of the Bund in Częstochowa and its activities, immediately following the liberation of the city from the bestial, Nazi claws and which was, later, very sadly, murdered yet again by the Communist Party.

## 2

Let us mention the historic days of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January 1945, in which, from Hitler's slave-camps in Częstochowa - HASAG-Pelcery, Raków, and Warta, in which munitions were produced for the German Army - 5,200 Jews perceived the free, bright glimmer! About 80 percent of the Jews liberated there were not residents of Częstochowa. These were Jews who had been dragged away to slave-labour in the aforementioned factories and death-camps.

Three days after the Germans had been expelled from Częstochowa, Liber Brener, J. Krauze, Herszl Prozer and Elias Sztajnic, who were active in the Bund's underground organisation, met and held a discussion aimed at reviving the Bundist organisation in the city. Shortly after posting an announcement in the Jewish Committee's premises, which was then [just] being organised, to the effect that all Bundists in the city were to turn to the members mentioned above, fifteen more Bundists presented themselves.

The first meeting was held at the lodgings of Krauze and Elias Sztajnic.

A Party Committee was created, which was comprised of the old Bundist activists mentioned above. The members spread out across the streets [and] went to the collective living quarters where, due to the specific conditions, especially motivated by safety, the liberated Jews lived and there they sought out Bundists and Bund sympathisers. Even though military operations were still continuing and the city was bombarded several times by the Germans, these members did not bring their work to a halt.

In those days, it was decided to group together in a few houses. To this end, the buildings [on aleja] Wolności 19 and on [ul.] Waszyngtona were settled. Herszl Prozer, Józef Krauze, J. Jakubowicz, and Elias Sztajnic lived in the house at aleja Wolności 19. Quite a few weapons were also found there, which came in very handy in the armament. Later, part of the weaponry was sent over to the Bundist arsenal in Warsaw, via Marek Edelman who, in those days, had come as a representative of the newly-established Bundist Central Committee in Warsaw. Liber Brener, and a number of other Bundists lived in the house at ul. Waszyngtona 8.

The subsequent discussion regarding the renewal of organised Bundist activity was, in fact, held in Liber Brener's home. On that occasion, it was also decided to approach the PPS [Polska Partia Socjalistyczna; The Polish Socialist Party] which, under the leadership of Aliozy [Jan] Gronkiewicz, Stankiewicz, and Józef Kazimierczak, helped with anything which the PPS could.

Dąbrówki, who was part of the first newly-established municipal magistracy [City Council], distributed, through this intervention, bread and the first milk rations for the Jewish populace, as well as specific aid to the rescued children in town.

In those days, Izaak Samsonowicz came to Częstochowa, as the representative of the Polish Home Office. Dr Sz. Herszenhorn, who was at the time a major in the Polish Army, also came as the representative of the temporary government. Herszenhorn also took part in the negotiations.

Contact with the PPS-leaning city council was through Prozer, who secured aid for the rescued Jews.

Having no inkling about a Jewish Committee on the central scale, the members threw out the idea of creating a special Jewish Committee of Częstochowa Jews. Such committee was in fact formed by all the parties. The [Bund] representatives on this committee, at the time, were Liber Brenner, Zajnwel Weksztajn and Herszl Prozer. Mojsze Lederman also joined later.

Then, the Jewish Bakers Cooperative was also created, which was made up of Bundists.

With the return of comrades, who had been in the German camps, the Bundist group already consisted of forty-odd members. Among them [were] Motl and Rywca Kuszniir, Mojsze Lederman, Becalel Altman, Ajzyk Berkensztadt and others.

Thus, the Bundist Organisation grew such that, in 1945, it had the right to send five delegates to the first nationwide conference of the Bundist organisations in Łódź. They were L. Brenner, E. Sztajnic, H. Prozer, Krauze and Lajbel Bergman. At this Bundist national conference, the further activity of the Bund was decided upon, as an independent Jewish socialist workers' party in post-War Poland. In accordance with this, it was decided to rent our own party premises, which was the largest "Party-House" in town and which was located on ul. Strażacka.

The official opening of the premises was attended by a representative of the Bund, Dawid Klin, who was a major in the Polish Army.

The Bund also gave the incentive to form cooperatives of shoemakers and tailors, of which members Lederman, Prozer and Fajwisz Kowalski became the Board of Directors.

### 3

From the moment that Częstochowa had become liberated, the Bund conducted its intensive activity. The Bund's 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in 1945, the guest speaker being our member Pudlowski. Its work particularly broadened, once the Bund opened the Party Club and the workers' restaurant.

That premises was visited daily by over one hundred Jews. Here, these Jews received, a cheap, tasty lunch at a neatly set table in a homelike environment, with radio-music [playing]. Large portraits of Bundist leaders adorned the walls. The daily press and current brochures were available on the tables of the other rooms

Every Sunday, jointly with the Jewish faction of the PPR [Polska Partia Robotnicza; The Polish Workers' Party] (Communists), cultural functions were held, which were attended by hundreds of Jews. The hall was always jam-packed with those Jews who had an interest in maintaining and supporting cultural activity in the Yiddish language. Recitations followed the lectures and, often times, discussions on the lectures. In one of these functions, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1946, Dawid Klin described his impressions of travelling from London and Paris.

The Bundist Organisation was also in contact with Bundist comrades in America who, many years before, had been connected with the Bundist Movement in Częstochowa. In particular, the Częstochowa Bundist Organisation maintained close contact with the writer of these lines, the representative of the Czenstochover Relief Committee in New York. With all my strength, together with other Bundists in America, I did everything that was possible, so that the Jews in Częstochowa should again be able to start a new, normal life, based on healthy foundations.

The election campaign to the Polish Sejm was, in Częstochowa in 1946, conducted jointly with all the three currents that were represented in the Jewish Committee. In addition, the Bund arranged shared cultural undertakings with the Jewish faction of the PPR, which were also used for the election campaign.

In this manner, at the end of April 1946, a large [Y.L.] Peretz meeting was arranged by the Jewish Committee, at which L. Brener delivered a great lecture on Peretz and member Lederman read aloud some of Peretz's creations.

In October 1946, the Bund's 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in Częstochowa. Guest speaker was member Falk. Lively cultural and information activities were maintained. Each week, lectures, discussions [and] talks and Party clubs [viz. circles; meetings] on different themes were held at the [Bund's] own premises. Thus, a collective lecture was held, with discussions on the theme: *Jewish Problems in Today's Reality*. Lectures were delivered by Mojsze Lederman and Liber Brener, who were received warmly by the assembled public.

Now, the Bundists in Częstochowa, following liberation, continued keeping the Bundist tradition alive and took an active part in all fields of political and social work. They were represented in the Jewish Regional Committee, L. Brener was the Chairman. Mojsze Lederman headed the Children's House, which was the finest institution in town.

Disregarding the difficult financial situation in which the Jewish Committee found itself, Mojsze Lederman employed all means in order to attain material aid, so that the children should not lack anything.

#### 4

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1946, at the Piotrków Cemetery, a memorial for the fallen martyred members, Pinie Gutkiewicz and Dawid Nisenholc was unveiling. The graves are side-by-side. Member Horowicz prepared the headstone and also erected a memorial slab for members Berliner,\* Jakub; Tenenberg, Zalma (from Częstochowa); Wajshoff, Abram; Kimelman, Leon, and his wife; Zaiten, Szmul; Waingarten, Szaja; Staszewski, Zalma; Adler, Moszek; Rozenberg, Berysz; Zauer, Icio; Frajnd, Tanchum; Frajnd, Mirjam; Majerowicz, Moryc; Szternfeld, Moszek; Waiser, Wolf; Waiser, Abram; Rener, Icio; Krzak, Chil; Wolfsztain, Estera, and Nisenholc, Herszel. These members were true to the Bundist cause up to the War and [also] during it. Some were leaders of the Bundist Underground Movement in Piotrków. They were arrested at the same time as the famous miscarriage of the Częstochowa members, distributing illegal proclamations against the German invaders. They were transported to Oświęcim and, there, they were murdered by the Germans. The memorial was unveiled by the Chairman of the Bundist Organisation, Aron Horowicz. The Częstochowa Bundist Committee was represented by the old survivor of the Łódź Ghetto, Mojsze Lederman, who gave the memorial speech.

Party gatherings were held frequently, at which current, Party [-related], political and social affairs were also dealt with.

At the Party meeting, which took place in January 1947, a new Party Committee was elected. The assembly expressed loyalty and acknowledgement to the members of the committee stepping down, for their work and underground activities during the teary War years and for the committee's intense activity during the course of the first year following liberation.

---

\* [TN: We have listed the names mentioned in the Yiddish original in the order and with the orthography they appear in on the actual memorial plaque. In the book itself, these differ slightly.]

The Bund was very active in the life of the small Jewish community in general. Every week, lectures on literary subjects were held for all the Jews in town. On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1947, a lecture was held by J. Celemenski, from Paris, on the topic: *The Situation of the Jews in Western Europe*. On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 1947, Izaak Samsonowicz (who had been a member of the Underground Bund's Central Committee), gave a lecture, in the Polish language, on the theme: *For Our and Their Freedom*. A great number of Polish workers came to this lecture. In his lecture, the speaker expounded, above all, on the activity of the Underground Bund under the Nazi occupation.

Newspapers read out loud aroused great interest amongst the Częstochowa Jews. The lectures and the cultural functions were the only cultural undertakings to take place in the city.

The evening, with the participation of the famous actor Szmulik'l Goldsztejn, made a great impression. The evening was directed by Comrade L. Brener. Member Baum (PPR) spoke about the importance of the elections, particularly for the Jews. On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1947, a large assembly, concerning the Bund's 8<sup>th</sup> convention in Poland, was held. Under chairmanship of member Lederman, a similar evening was also arranged in concert with the PPR, at which Szmul Frank read out his articles.

On 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1947, the Bund's second convention since the deliverance from the German occupation was held in Wrocław. The delegates chosen from the Częstochowa Bundist Organisation to this second convention, were M. Kuszniir, M. Lederman, Samsonowicz ([reporter for the] *Głos Bundu*), and L. Brener. L. Brener was voted onto the new Central Committee of the nationwide Bund. As representative, M. Lederman was elected.

At this assembly, members bade farewell to Abram Stolar, who had come as guest-representative from the Bund in New York.

On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1947 a protest rally was held, in connection to the state of emergency in the Land of Israel. This rally was called by the Jewish Committee. On behalf of the Bund, Mojsze Lederman spoke of the difficult situation in which Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel had found itself. He specifically mentioned the provocative acts of the Irgun [Organisation; a paramilitary group], which poured oil on the flames of British imperialism. An appropriate resolution, which the chairman of the protest rally, L. Brener, proposed, was accepted.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April 1947, the first May Assembly of all the political parties (Bund, Stronnictwo Demokratyczne [The Alliance of Democrats], and Stronnictwo Ludowe [People's Party]) took place. The Bundist Organisation was invited to attend, in order to represent the city's Jewish workforce. Member Kuszniir attended on behalf of the Bund.

For 1<sup>st</sup> May 1947, the Bund's committee in Częstochowa put up illustrated placards. The banners of the PPS, PPR and Bund were carried at the front of the procession. L. Brener represented the Bund in the presidium. Both the demonstration, in which almost all the city's working Jews marched behind Bundist banners, and the assembly, put everyone in a festive mood. On that 1<sup>st</sup> of May, the Bund marched within the general proletarian parade. At the head of the procession flags were carried of the *powiat* [County] Committees and the municipal committees of the PPS and PPR parties, and of the Bund. About 50,000 people took part in this demonstration.

In the evening, a joint assembly with the Jewish faction of the PPR was organised at the Bund's premises. The concert featured the military band of the 6<sup>th</sup> *piechoty pulk* [infantry regiment].

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of that same month, a party meeting of the Bundist Organisation was held. Member Lederman delivered a report on the Central Committee's last plenary meeting and read out the resolutions which the CC had passed, both regarding the political situation, and the forthcoming celebrations. After the practical proposals concerning the local celebration, the meeting agreed to take heed of the resolutions and the decisions. Then and there, some of the members paid the daily fee for the Bund's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Fund. The preparations for the Bund's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration were in full swing. As at 15<sup>th</sup> November, the organisation had brought in 3,815 zloty.

25<sup>th</sup> October 1947 (one day after *Yom Kippur*) was the anniversary of the liquidation of the Częstochowa Jewish community of 40,000 souls by the Hitler brigands. In this context, the Jewish Committee called together the Jewish populace to honour the annihilated by gathering at the Częstochowa cemetery. A couple of hundred people gathered, who laid flowers and wreaths on the mass-graves of Częstochowa's perished saints and martyrs.

On that same day, at five in the afternoon, a memorial assembly was held at one of the halls in Częstochowa, where a large public gathered. The Mayor and the Deputy Mayors, the Chairman of the Rada Narodowa [National Council], representatives of the court, military prosecutor's offices, the Press and many others were present. Speeches were delivered on the destruction of the Jewish settlement in the city and on the forthcoming goals. Our comrade L. Brener spoke on behalf of the Jewish Committee.

The Bund's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1947 at the municipal theatre hall. The stage was gloriously decorated. Member Kuszniur opens the ceremony in a fully-packed hall and greets the representatives of the authorities, political parties and guests present there. He invites, to the stage the Mayor, the Prezes [president] of the municipal National Council, the representative of the Bund's Central Committee (Member Hurwicz), PPS, PPR [Jewish faction?], of the Jewish Committee, the general PPR and representatives of the press.

The Chairman, Mojsze Lederman, delivered a short speech and mentioned the victims of Hitler's invasion and occupation and the annihilated leaders of the Jewish working class. Lederman sent a hearty greeting to the Bund in the rest of the world, from all the surviving members.

He also extended greetings to representatives of PPS, PPR, the Jewish Committee [and] the Jewish group in the PPR. The Łódź Orchestra of the Culture League played the melodies *Czerwony Sztandar* [Red Flag; Polish workers' hymn] and the *International*.

The representative of the Bund's Central Committee, member Hurwicz, in Polish, thanked the representatives of the government and the political parties present for their greetings. The speaker then went on, in Yiddish, to deliver the lecture on the Bund's 50 years.

His speech generated vigorous applause. The artistic part was presented by the young members, the little fellows of the Łódź SKIF [*Sozialistischen Kinder Verband*; Socialist Children's Association]. The little ones had nothing to be ashamed of with their presentation. They performed like true, grown-up actors.

Member Brener delivered the closing words. With short, spirited words, he underlined the activity of the Bund in the field of reinstituting a new Jewish life in liberated Poland.

The ceremony concluded with the singing of "*Die Shvue*" [The Oath; Bundist anthem].

On 8<sup>th</sup> February 1948, a hearing was held regarding the Jewish assimilationists in town and in other cities in Poland in general. The plaintiff was Hurwicz and Lederman was the defendant. As witnesses, two Jews were present. The prosecutor only gave his riposte. The trial left a good impression.

When the sad news arrived from America that Shloyme Mendelson had died, the entire Bundist Organisation in town mourned. An obituary notice was printed in the Warsaw [*Naje*] *Folkscajtung* [New People's Paper], on behalf of the Częstochowa Bundist Organisation. The obituary read:

*With bowed heads, we stand before the radiant memory of our unforgettable comrade and mentor, Shloyme Mendelson!*

The 1<sup>st</sup> of May celebration in 1948 in Częstochowa was very impressive. Never had the city of Częstochowa celebrated the Workers' Holiday as in that year. Along the entire way through which the procession was to march, ten-metre poles were erected on either side and, on them, were stretched six-metre red banners. It appeared as if the city had been draped in red fabric. In the Jewish Committee, an inter-party May-Committee was formed, in which were represented PPR, Bund and PZ [*Poalei Zion*; Workers of Z.]. The May-Committee issued a poster and sent invitations to the city's Jewish population, calling upon them to gather in the Jewish Committee's courtyard.

Jewish workers, who assembled at the appointed location, had already appeared by early morning. At nine o'clock sharp, the procession set off. [Only] 150 people participated in the separate Jewish procession, because a very great number of Jewish workers demonstrated [together] with the factories or with the workshops in which they were employed. The procession marched off to the general assembly point and then joined the general parade, in which demonstrated 50,000 of the city's proletariat. The banners of the Bund, PPR, Poalei Zion and private banners were carried at the front of the procession.

A national conference of the Bund in Poland was held in Wrocław on 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> April 1948.

## 5

Regarding the years in Poland after Liberation, the Bundist Fajwiz Kowalski tells us a great many interesting episodes, which depict the sorrowful state of those Jews who came over to Poland from Soviet Russia, especially the sorry situation of the Jewish socialists of all sorts and, in particular, the members of the Bund. It is worthwhile to at least quote a part of that which Comrade Fajwiz recounts:

*The year 1946, a time when from all corners of Russia stretched forth wagons with Polish citizens travelling home to Poland, was also the beginning of a new era for the thousands of Bundists, who had not come to terms with the fate that the Soviet regime had forced upon them. In each one's heart glowed a belief that he would find someone from their family [and] perhaps also members of the Party.*

*Upon crossing the old Polish border, however, we immediately experienced the first bitter disappointment. From all sides, we received the sad news that, alas, only a small number [of individuals] had survived from the family and of the comrades of old. In addition, Polish antisemitism, just as in the Hitler era, has once again begun showing its true revolting face and has started raging anew, perhaps more than before. We constantly came upon Polish faces full of hate for the "niedobitki" - meaning the Jews who had remained and who had not been finished off - who had, to the Polish murderers' great surprise, begun returning home alive. Also, at all times along the road, we, those returning, were forced to flee from bands*

*who terrorised the caravans. And more than one Jewish victim perished at the hands of the Polish hooligans, in these days of Liberated Poland...*

*I went off to Częstochowa and there, to my great wonder, I found the Bundist Organisation in its full activity. The Bundists received us, the [newly] arrived members, like brothers.*

*After a while, I began to work as a tailor, in the tailors' cooperative which the Bund had established. The cooperative was developing very nicely. But, [right] in the middle [of all this], came the orders from the Jewish section of the Communist Party, which, by taking over the management, literally both ruined the cooperative and also brought antagonism amongst the workers.*

*These cooperatives, which had been built with the moneys from the Joint and the Jewish Workers Committee, and through the great support of the Częstochowers in America, bit by bit passed into other hands, which caused the best workers to run away. At that same time, the Kielce pogrom happened, which thoroughly shook the Polish Jews and they began leaving Poland.*

*The cooperatives continued to operate until the middle of 1948, when the PPR (the Communists) commenced the general liquidation of all political parties. Częstochowa, too, shared in this same fate. By way of various cajoling, Jewish life, little by little, became "centralised" by the renowned "Unity Commissions", the "sixes" which were, in truth, only of benefit to the Jewish Communists. As members of these "sixes", only loyal followers of the so-called "Unity" were admitted.*

## 6

This was the fate of the Bund in the small, surviving, Jewish community, following the destruction [caused] by Nazism. [It was] a little, shrunken Jewish settlement and yet the surviving Bundists still showed the drive to continue living and fighting for their free, democratic-socialistic ideal.

We must not forget the political circumstances which befell the Bund at the time and under which it conducted its activity. In 1945, it fell to the lot of the Soviet Army to march in over the ruins of Poland, once the defeat of Hitler's hordes had already been sealed. Keeping back the Soviet Army [in 1944] from marching into Warsaw, and not coming to the aid of the Warsaw Uprising, was the plan Stalin devised, so that Poland should become communist. Moreover, the disbanding, years before the outbreak of the Second World War, of the Communist Party in Poland and also the liquidation of the Polish communist leaders, who were tricked [into going] to Russia two years prior to the Hitler war, were very likely already [done] in preparation for the Hitler-Molotov pact<sup>1</sup> - the [same] pact that was intended to lead to the partition of Poland, the larger part of which, naturally, would belong to Soviet Russia. This was, in fact, the Communist Theory's programme, written black on white: that Poland should be economically dependent upon Russia and should, at most, pretend to have territorial autonomy and not any [form of] independent sovereignty. The Warsaw Uprising, however, convinced Communism that this would not be so easy to realise. Means were applied in various manners, to trick the Polish populace into the political sack, to be later forced into line.

They first prepared trained Stalinist agents at home in Russia and, later, together with the Red Army, sent them into Poland under a masked name (Communism in Poland was not very popular): *Polska Partia Robotnicza* (PPR) - that was the name of the new party. Mastery over the country was transferred to it. Other parties, such as the PPS, the Bund and the [Polish] Peasants' Party [*Polskie*

---

<sup>1</sup> [TN: More commonly known as the "Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact"]



*Stronnictwo Ludowe*; PSL], were left a little freedom. But, today, it is already clear to all that the goal was one party, with a dictatorial government, behind which stood the Soviet Army. [In] the first years, [the game of] democracy, as it were, was still played - conventions, elections to a constituent assembly, plebiscites, etc. Through arrests and liquidations, the desired and planned Stalinist Communism was achieved. With all its means, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1948, it brought about the unification of the PPR with the PPS, under one party named PZPR [Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza; The Polish United Workers' Party].

In the Jewish street, there was no need for camouflage because, after all, the Jewish People in Poland had been eradicated by Nazism. And the survivors, the 70,000-80,000 Jews? What role could they play in a country with 30 million people, one part of whom proved to be communists and the other being consumed with a zoological kind of antisemitism? There, just a couple of Jewish Committees would suffice. [But] with the Bund, you see, which had nearly fifty years of revolutionary activity, it would prove to be a bit harder. However, even with the Bundists, a solution would already be found. There would be enough PPR activists in the Jewish vicinity - with the aid of a Jewish newspaper, a few Jewish books, a Jewish theatre and a number of agents as communist overseers, the likes of the Gordyns, Zachariaszes, and Mirskis, who had already had a taste of the Soviet prisons, the Jewish people would be cleansed of parties and of free opinions. There was nothing to worry about - everything would become monolithic, just as Stalin had commanded.

Is it any wonder then, that in such a situation, the Polish Bund was led to liquidate itself?

The Bundists surviving after Hitler's hell desired - with their yet unquenched ideological fire, with all their strength - to build Jewish life up anew, in accordance with their tradition, as free men with a free spirit. They, the Bundists, were far from willing to follow Stalinist orders. They well remembered what had been done to the leaders of the Bund in Soviet Russia. With all their might, the returning Bundists opposed the pretended "unification". Not in vain did member Fiszgrund, in his opening speech at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Bund in Poland, on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> October 1948 (at which the question of liquidating the Bund was considered), say, "We must admit that we have remained behind in regards to the unification process on the Polish street". And member Brener said, at that discussion, "When we speak of the Bund's errors, we must also not forget the positive moments. Our aim was, through the Bund, Socialism - we need to go on the path that leads to Socialism".

Do these words, then, not indicate that some external, lateral force had been pushing towards the so-called "unification?"

Also, at the plenum, the concluding words of Mojsze Lederman who accepted the "unification", tell us of the yielding [involved] in submitting to the Communists. The Declaration of Unification concluded thus:

***... to strengthen the party-work in all fields and to prepare all of the organisation for the great moment of joining the country's proletariat.***

But member Lederman was forced to say:

***I do not know when we shall dissolve our party. We have much work before us yet, but all of us together are inspired by the idea that we shall not end up as the Russian Bund once did – as Mensheviks. Our party is dear to us and I therefore cannot actually imagine our party ending its history in any other way than how we have decided. in the most***

***categorical manner, we must marginalise all those who do not wish to walk with us on the path to the Unified Party.***

Ponder well on the words and read between the lines:

*I do not know when we shall dissolve our party. Our party is dear to us. We must, in the most categorical manner, remove all those who do not wish to walk with us, etc.*

These are words which point clearly at the strong pressure from the Communists, who surely threatened, with physical annihilation, that thus and not otherwise, should occur! That is what the politics of Stalin's regime in Russia desired. The "PPR activists in the Jewish vicinity", the Gordyns, the Zachariaszes, [and the] Mirskis, one hundred percent implemented the regulations in the decrees of the Bermans and Minces. With a great to-do, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the PPS was liquidated, following arrests and persecutions and, with a lesser amount of commotion - the Bund [, as follows].

At the extraordinary congress of the Bund in Poland, on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1949 in Wrocław, a resolution was embraced, which has the ring of an order from the Kremlin: "To disband the party ([viz.] the Bund – R.F. [(note by) Raphael Federman]), and to call upon its members to join the PZPR, in order to participate in its ranks in the struggle for Socialism, which is the loftiest ideal of the whole of working humanity and also the dream of the Jewish working masses!"

The call to the Bundists ended with the words:

*Long live the Polish Workers' Party! (not, Heaven forbid, the Communist Party – R.F.) Long live a socialist Poland! Long live the Soviet Union! Long live the international solidarity of the working class! Long live Socialism!*

In the Central "Liquidation Commission's" communiqué, we read:

*In coordination with the secretariat of the PZPR, a list will be made of all members of the Bundist organisations, in order to enable them to individually join the PZPR party.*

*In accordance with the decision of the Congress, the Central Liquidation Commission has appointed local commissions for Łódź, Szczecin, Częstochowa, Katowice, Lublin, Warsaw, Kraków, Tarnów, Piotrków, and Włocławek. A separate District Liquidation Commission has been appointed in Wrocław, which has selected liquidation commissions in Niederschlesien [Dolny Śląsk; Lower Silesia].*

As we contemplate these documents, we clearly see the intentions of those passing the resolution. The main focus was on disbanding the party (the Bund), so that each member should, as an individual, join the PZPR. In the Democratic People's Poland [i.e. The Polish People's Republic; *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, or PRL], there is no place for parties. There must be one single party, just as in Soviet Russia. Organisations are demanded to preserve the party-archive and the entire party-inventory. Liquidation commissions were answerable for this. Who are the liquidation commissions? Communist agents. They must be careful that no trace should remain of the archives and inventories that Bundist organisations have acquired prior to this time and to see to it that all members should be able to join the PZPR (the Communists). Should this or that former Bundist not wish to become a member of the unified PZPR, this is roughly what is stated in said communiqué:

*Be aware that, in coordination with the PZPR secretariat, a list is being made of all members of the Bundist organisations, for [them] to join the PZPR party individually; this is done so*

*that you should participate in its ranks in the struggle for Socialism - the loftiest ideal of the whole of working humanity and also the dream of the Jewish working masses.*

Was Soviet Socialism, Stalin's Communism, "the loftiest ideal", precisely the "dream" of the whole of working humanity [and] also "the dream" of the Jewish working masses? Now, we all already know how honest and idealistic sanguinary Stalinism was. Four members were elected to the Central Liquidation Commission. One of them was the active public figure from Częstochowa, Mojsze Lederman and two [were] Częstochowa Bundists - Izaak Samsonowicz and Maks Brum.

## 7

The liquidation work of the Bund in liberated Poland was carried out with meticulous accuracy, without the physical opposition on the part of the loyal Bundists. But these trusted Bundists of old no longer knew a free life, either politically or socially. Life became unbearable for them all. The majority lost their courage and will for any political-communal work. The Bundists were fully aware of what had happened earlier to Bundist activists, following the liquidation of the Bund in Soviet Russia. They well remembered the devilish processes [and] the murders committed against the Bundist leaders, immediately after the Bolsheviks had come to power. Before them, the Bundists now saw the spectre of the physical and spiritual barracks of Soviet Russia, and they comprehended that the same [fate] awaited them also, in the so-called "People's Democratic Poland". There was only one way out - [To go] away - to leave the "New Poland!".

Immediately after the supposed "unification" and even earlier, prior to the liquidation of the Bund, they first forced the Bund itself to expel certain members - the **most loyal** Bundists - who were, in the opinion of the Communists, not fit to join the so-called "United Workers' Party" (viz. the Communists - R.F.). This, [for them,] quite simply meant being put in danger of imminent arrest, not being able to obtain work and many more other persecutions.

Directly following the liquidation of the Bund, in a half-legal and illegal manner, hundreds of Bundists with their families left Poland. Aid was given to the arrestees and, in secret, Bundist holidays still continued to be celebrated.

The Bund had been formally liquidated, but for hundreds of Bundists, the ideal to live and fight as free men for the socialist cause persisted, as did the freedom of the working humanity.

## 8

Nowadays, the Bund no longer exists in Poland as, in Poland, there is no longer a free life in the full sense of the word and, as a matter of course, there is no longer a free Jewish life. The city of Częstochowa may serve as an example of how Jewish life in Poland appears today. How Jewish life appears in Częstochowa, the reader may glean from the articles by Brener, Lederman and Sznajderman, which are printed in this current book, *Czenstochov*. But even in the time since these articles were written, significant changes for the worse have taken place. Suffice it to say, that the crimes of the Soviet regime and its leader Stalin, which were disclosed by the current leader Nikita S. Khrushchev at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, have made it clear to every cogitative person, that the system of government upon which Soviet Russia was built is one great pyramid of evil. Instead of the rule of the proletariat - the rule of the one Party. Instead of the rule of the Party - the rule of the Central Committee. Instead of the rule of the Central Committee - the rule of the Politburo [Political Bureau] and, instead of the rule of the members of the Politburo - the rule of the General Secretary of the Communist Party over the land, be it Stalin or his murky successor, Khrushchev.

Is this a regime which a nation needs, in order to bring about true socialism and communism?

If the idol Stalin, who for nearly thirty years ruled over Soviet Russia with an iron hand, could turn out to be, according to Khrushchev's words and description, a maniac and a murderer, and if such fighters for Communism like Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov could turn out to be black sheep, who had to be flung out from the sacred white flock of Communism, then where is the further guarantee that he too, Khrushchev, will not turn out in time to be maniac, a murderer and [sic, or] a black sheep, from whom the sacred white flock will need to distance themselves?

All these events have shaken the communist movement throughout the globe and they also continue to constantly arouse doubts amongst communist adherents and sympathisers.

Khrushchev's attack on Stalin has led to certain changes within Soviet Russia itself and in the Soviet-controlled satellite countries. The main shift occurred in Poland. Of what do these changes consist?

Following the upheaval in Poland last October [1956], freedom of speech was also instituted also in the Sejm (Parliament), where the non-communists voted against the Party, at least on issues pertaining to religion and freedom of conscience.

Also, inside the Communist Party itself, and at the electoral conventions, "freedom of speech" reigns in Poland - exactly like in Soviet Russia.

Even though a censure has been reinstituted lately and some centres of critique have been dissolved, still, no one is persecuted for expressing thoughts that are not in keeping with the accepted Communist "line". Within the Party itself, the "revisionists" were lately suppressed to some extent, but their mouths were not completely shut. The far-reaching achievement in Poland is the growth of the truly independent forces. Besides the Communist Party, in Poland, the Catholic Church enjoys more liberty than in any other communist country. A second independent force is the "Peasants' Party". It was, in the beginning, devised as an instrument of Communist rule, but it grew bit by bit into a mass-organisation, with strong roots in the new "agricultural groups", such as, for instance, in the Youth Movement, which was much stronger than even the Communist Youth Organisation. The Peasants' Party was the defender of the peasantry's interests.

The renowned socialist, publicist Richard Lowenthal, in the *London Observer*, comes to the conclusion that Poland is the only communist country, at the moment, where the principle of government through a single party, the Communist Party, has become greatly weakened. This simply means that the communist, dictatorial regime is not firmly established.

## 9

How did these changes affect the Jewish life?

The Gomułka regime knows full-well what social forces surge within the Polish people [and], therefore, employs all means of compromise and guards the people with [the aid] of a Muscovite invasion on Polish soil. Gomułka knows that *this* demon is feared by the people. The Polish nation's fear of the *Bolshevik Demon* strengthens Gomułka's power. But Gomułka also knows that the majority of Poles are consumed by a traditional, zoological antisemitism and this may, once again, weaken his own regime. He forgets his elemental, socialist, international principles. He does not oppose this wild, antisemitic madness. What is it that he does do? He freely opens the gates of

Poland to the tens of thousands of Jews who remain in the country and he gives them the opportunity to leave the country, if only to retain his rule.

In a gentle manner, he informs the Jews:

*For nearly a thousand years, the Jewish people has, with its strength and energy, with sweat and blood, helped build the country of Poland. In the Tsarist era, the Jewish People indeed participated with its best sons and daughters in the battle to liberate the Polish land and folk. During the Hitler period, the Jewish People fertilised the Polish soil with its blood. The Jews were the first to begin the hopeless resistance, with their courageous ghetto uprising against the Nazi invader, and saved Poland's honour in front of the whole world. We have, therefore, erected on the ruins of Warsaw a magnificent Ghetto Memorial. We shall, in our history, never forget this. But now, my dear Jews, go where you wish - even to the State of Israel, although this is also against our current principle. Little Jews, go [away] from here, for our rule is at stake.*

To his Jewish lads - the Bermans, the Goldbergs [and] the Zachariaszes, who loyally carried out all Stalin's orders - to them, Gomułka says:

*You, too, stand in my way. Your noses are too long and you are recognisable, even though you have made your names Polish. Even Khrushchev has recognised you. Go [to] where you came from. We shall already implement socialism without you. Without you, [it will happen] much faster. You have received your reward - we've allowed you to publish Jewish newspapers, Jewish books [and] permitted you to stage Jewish theatre. For history, this suffices, because in Poland, you will not be able to live - neither as Jews nor as persons. Besides, you see, after all, what has been done with your people in the model-country of communism, Soviet Russia. There, your best sons of Jewish culture were physically and spiritually murdered. We are therefore more humane to you Jews than what the Soviet regime in Russia proved to be. See, for example, the Polish fallen victims (communists) in Russia - there, [they] were rehabilitated\*. We do not need to rehabilitate you. Therefore, take the path of freedom which we offer you. The negro has done his [work] and he now may go.*

Thus, the remaining Jews in Poland, who were almost completely assimilated and saw themselves as true Poles, were now forcibly once more compelled to take upon themselves a difficult destiny and go on the road - to take, back in hand, the wanderer's staff.

The chapter of Jewish life in Poland has practically ended, or is now ending. The supposed "historical necessity" and the "historical processes", which were created by the followers of Lenin [and] Stalin, and nowadays by the Jew-hating Khrushchev, have led to this. With the liquidation of the Bund, Jewish communists in Poland contributed much to the approximation and acceleration of these same processes. Our city Częstochowa, too, could not be the exception. The Bund in Częstochowa is now a thing of the past.

To our great sorrow and agony, there is no longer a Jewish life in Poland and there is consequently no longer a Bund.

The book *Doyres Bundistn* [Generations of Bundists], edited by J.S. Hertz, has set itself the task of presenting a modest memorial - stories of the lives of the greatest Bundist leaders, to the smallest,

---

\* [TN: Soviet Rehabilitation began following Stalin's death in 1953, when the government undertook the rehabilitation of people who had been repressed and criminally prosecuted without due basis. All too often, rehabilitation was posthumous, as many victims had been executed, or had died in labour camps.]

simplest Bundist, who at some time [or other], in a historic moment, by a deed acquired a name, with which he had the privilege to be included in this historical Memorial Book. May it also be permitted me to hereby respectfully mention all those Bundists, who are still in my memory, those simple, upright, idealistic Bundists, whose lives were filled with courage and with struggle, for the true humanistic ideal - to build a world without rulers and without subjects; a world of economic and spiritual liberty and a world of unified peoples. These Bundist martyrs were annihilated by the fascist Nazism as a part of the millions of Jews in Poland, those holy and pure ones. In my opinion, they all should be in the Bundist pantheon of heroes and martyrs. All the names of the Bund members are mentioned in the section *In Memory of the Częstochowa Jews Who Were Annihilated*, on p. 290.



***The first elected Bund Committee in Częstochowa. Standing, from the right: M. Kuszniir, Herszl Prozer. Sitting, from the right: J. Krauze, Mojsze Lederman, Liber Brener, and Elias Sztajnic***



***The Bund Central Committee in 1945. Sitting, from the right: S. Fiszgrund, Dr Sz. Herszhorn, Dr Michał Szuldenfraj, Chaim Wasser, [and] Abram Stolar. Standing, from the right: G. G. Jaszuński, L. Brener, G. Fogel, [and] L. Pudlowski***



***A Bundist Party Assembly in 1946, with the participation of Jacob Pat***



***The Bundist Part Committee in 1947***



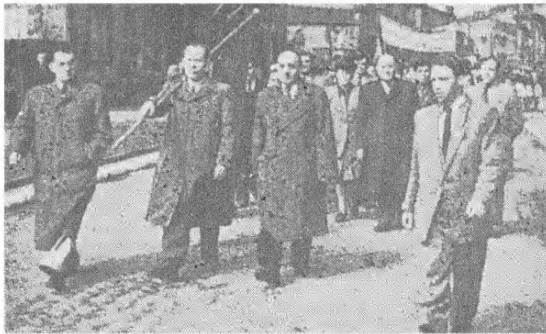
***The Bundist Party Committee in 1946, with Jacob Pat, delegate of the Jewish Workers' Committee in New York***



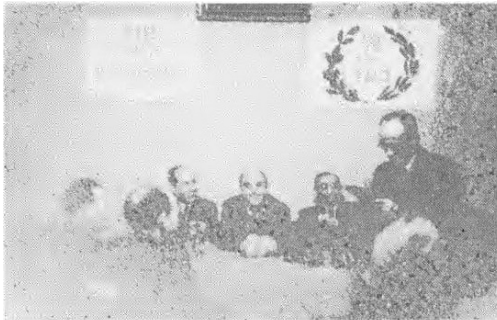
***Celebrating 48 years to the Bund, in 1945***



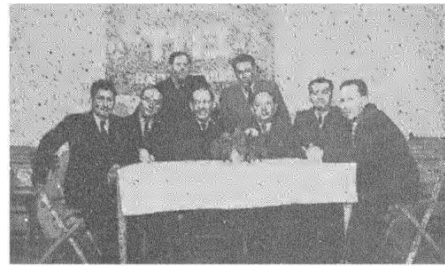
*The Bundist demonstration on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May*



*The Bund Presidium at a meeting in the Workers' Restaurant. Szmul Frank reads a chapter from a Jewish writer's work.*



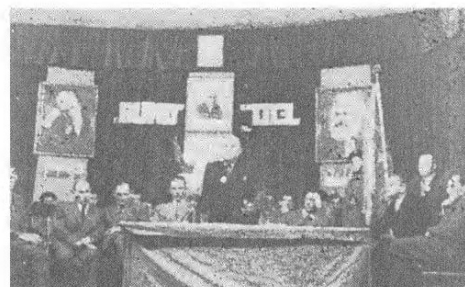
*The Bundist Active [viz. Executive] in Częstochowa before the outbreak of the Second World War*



*The Bund Committee in Częstochowa, with Abram Stolar, from New York, in 1947*



*The Bund's Party Assembly, with the participation of Abram Stolar*



*The Bund's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Częstochowa's Municipal Theatre. Speaking is Mojsze Lederman.*



*The Bund's 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, which took place on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1945. Speaking: member Falk*