

The Activity of the United Czenstochover Relief Committee in New York (1950-1957)

Introduction

In 1950, the *Częstochower Landsmannschaft* in New York began a new chapter in its history and activity. A large part of its members - those who had been its builders and leaders - had refused to continue to lead and to proceed with the Relief's work. The sister organisations, such as the [Czenstochover] Young Men's [Society], the [Częstochower] Branch of the Order* [and] the *Działoszyner* Society, which were an integral part of the United Czenstochover Relief Committee and Ladies Auxiliary, gradually distanced themselves from the organisation. During Fellow Jacob Senzer's term as president, these established and profitable members brought their participation in the Relief's active aid work to an end.

The *landsmannschaften*, including the *Częstochower* one, were then going through an ideological crisis. The goals and tasks, which were the basis for the existence of every *landsmannschaft*, had lost much of their content. The *Old Home*, which was the cementing force holding the *landsleute* abroad together, no longer existed. And, even if a small minority did still remain - who were, by the way, unfamiliar to the local *landsleit* who had immigrated of old - they were not enough to preserve the sentiment and attitude towards the hometown. The psychological moment, here, had overcome the feelings. If truth be told, we must say that such tendencies of hopelessness and detachment had already become apparent soon after the end of the War. The destruction of the Jewish communities in Poland had created, amongst the *landsleit* here, a defeatist atmosphere, which buried many productive forces beneath themselves. [However,] for a while it seemed that the false prophets were wrong. Precisely in the first years after the War, the Jewish group in Poland and in *Częstochowa* had shown vitality and a will to exist. To our great sorrow, the reality turned out to be cruel and tearful. The Jewish community in *Częstochowa* was reduced to a small handful of souls. The negative tendencies, which had reigned certain elements in the first years following the War, once more gained the upper hand.

Other reasons those leaving [the *landsmannschaft*] gave for the step they had [taken] are, for the sake of truth, more objective than subjective - the Cold War which had flared up between East and West, the political changes that had taken place in Eastern Europe, the steady decrease [in numbers] of the *Surviving Remnant* in Poland - including in *Częstochowa* - did not remain without influence on these individuals who had left. The decrease in requests for aid on part of the *Częstochowers* in *Częstochowa* also caused, in large measure, the decision of those departing. On the other hand, they defended their step with the fact that Jewish ethnic organisations, here in the country, had general relief-operation enterprises [in place] for the *Surviving Remnant* arriving in America, as well as for those requiring aid, in any location in the country where aid could reach.

To the *Częstochower Landsmannschaft's* credit it must be said, that not all of its members followed in the footsteps of the deserters. There were individuals, among the administration, who had walked out, as well as a number of *landsleit*, who wished to continue maintaining the organisation further. According to them, there were still enough reasons to lead activity. It is quite true that the proposed

* [TN: Reference to the Jewish People's Fraternal Order; see p.241.]

work plans were not on the same scale as those of the previous years, but they did not want to forsake anyone who may turn for help and support, and this willingness and responsibility to respond to the call for help from an individual was already a sufficient excuse for those remaining to maintain the further existence of the *landsmannschaft*.

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The Relief's work went over to the hands of R. Federman, the President, and K. Lederman, the Secretary. They tried to reorganise the Relief and made every effort to attract the newly-arrived *landsleit*. At the beginning, it seemed that the Relief would be successfully re-activated. The newly-arrived formed a club and gathered on various occasions - mainly holidays. The remaining members of the former administration endeavoured to create an attractive and homely atmosphere, in order to bring together as many new *landsleit* as possible. Unfortunately, these attempts did not turn out properly and they did not yield the desired results. Many of the new people refused to co-operate for arrays of personal reasons. The subsequent work was, therefore, weakened and diminished, but it did not cease.

At the end of 1950, the situation worsened further. To the scarceness of manpower was added the scarceness of money. It was difficult to follow up on the requests for aid. The leading individuals called an urgent meeting of the sister organisations, such as the Czenstochover Young Men's, the *Działoszyner* Society and members of the *Częstochower* branch of the Order, in order to discuss the circumstances which had arisen. Despite their promise to participate in relief works, leanings, however, towards giving up relief activities began to show themselves. Luckily, no one brought forth such proposal.

Notwithstanding, and despite the hard-working conditions, in 1950, the Relief was able to conduct two important undertakings in order to acquire financial means:

- a) the Memorial Service for the destruction of *Częstochowa*, which was held on 8th October at the Manhattan Plaza Hall, on 66 East 4th Street, New York, and
- b) the 30th Anniversary Banquet dedicated to the activists of the Relief and the Ladies Auxiliary.

A bulletin also appeared which gave an insight into the activity of the Relief in the previous years and which contains a wealth of information content. The Relief also undertook an operation to create jobs for *landsleit*.

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On 28th March 1951, new officials were elected who, despite all the hindrances and difficulties, took it upon themselves to continue with the work. Flw H. Zygas is elected President; Romalowski – Secretary; Mrs Ch. Rotman – Vice-President and Dawid Frajermauer – Treasurer. With the Ladies Auxiliary, Mrs Victoria Davis is elected Chairwoman; Mmes Ruche'le Frajermauer and Minnie Dauman – Vice-Chairwomen; G. Federman – Secretary and Mrs Helen Czarny – Treasurer.

The first tasks, which the newly-elected Relief carried out, already once again confirmed the necessity for the existence of the organisation. With toil and effort, the Relief was able to send to Israel, for the forthcoming *Pesach*, thirty parcels of food at a cost of \$300, as well as medication for ailing *landsleit*. Financial support was given to the newcomer here in the country, as well as for a sick lady in Sweden. With the monetary collaboration of the Czenstochover Young Men, the Relief paid \$200 for a prosthetic leg for a *landsmann* in Israel. Among the undertakings which the Relief conducted in the course of the year, was the annual Memorial Service for the destroyed

Częstochower community. That was held on 28th October 1951, at the Manhattan Plaza, 66 East 4th Street, New York.

Cultural enterprises were also carried out and a lively connection with *landsmannschaften* outside the United States was gradually established. The Relief became the connecting link and a location where individual *landsleit* could meet. *Landsleit* from Canada were sometimes present at the meetings and lively greetings were brought us on behalf of the *Częstochower Landsmannschaft* in Argentina. The Relief took part, with salutations, in various celebrations held by *landsmannschaften* overseas.

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In 1952, the Relief gradually began to broaden its activity in various directions. Efforts were made, through the Workers Committee, to bring one of our townspeople to America - a woman. Efforts were made to propagate the book *Czenstochover Yidn* here and in other countries. Among the cultural undertakings which the Relief arranged, along with the club for the newly-arrived, was a *Purim* Ball was held on 15th March, a "Third *Seder*" on 13th April and a *Chanukah* Evening on 21st December. The annual Memorial Service was held on 26th October, at the Manhattan Plaza, 66 East 4th Street. The meetings, which took place during the course of the year, brought out the fact that the Relief was in contact with *Częstochower landsmannschaften* in Canada, Israel and other states in America. On 7th December, new officials are elected. The office of President is again held by Flw H. Zygas; the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were changed. As Secretary, Flw R. Federman is chosen and, as an assistant, Flw Ch. Rotman. The office of Treasurer is filled by Flw Bida. In the Ladies Auxiliary, Flw Frajmauer is voted as Chairwoman, Mrs Szoham as Treasurer and Flw Czarny.

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With these minor changes to its leadership, the Relief began its work in 1953. The fact that the secretariat passed into the hands of Flw R. Federman was of important significance. As one who had actively participated in the relief work since the very start of his coming to America, he had the proper insight into the organisation's needs and was consequently the man fit to hold the living nerve - the secretariat. *Landsleit* had, once more, applied for aid. For this cause, material means were needed - if only the smallest ones. As in previous years, the Relief, together with the club which had been created, now, too, had an array of undertakings which were to bring in the fitting monetary income for aid. On 18th January, the swearing-in of the new officials took place. The *Purim* Ball was held on 28th February. The Third *Seder* took place on 5th April at the Academy Hall on 853 Broadway. The annual Memorial Service for the destruction of *Częstochowa*, the 11th in a row, was held on Sunday 25th October (16th Cheshvan 5714), at the Manhattan Plaza Hall, on 66 East 4th Street in New York. As in previous years, the Memorial Service was an expression of the reverential awe and veneration which the *landsleit* carry in their hearts for the *Martyrs of Częstochowa*, both by their large attendance and by their contributions. The proceeds of these undertakings were allocated to aid. It is worth noting that, in 1953, the Relief donated one-hundred dollars to the Jewish Workers Committee, at the latter's request. The Jewish Workers Committee had always helped out the Relief in activities in which the Committee's assistance had been needed.

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The undertakings, which the Relief had conducted in the previous two years, gradually became permanent institutions. By holding a *Seder*, a ball and similar functions, the Relief's activists had in mind to continue certain old traditions, as well as creating an appropriate environment for the newcomers. These gatherings became the rendezvous point for the *landsleit*, which provided the

Relief's activists with the opportunity to appeal to them regarding collaboration, funds and other necessary issues. The leadership, however, held its administration meetings concurrently. Thus, on 16th May, 10th September and 31st October 1954, special meetings were held, at which various work projects were discussed. The 12th Memorial Service in a row was conducted on 24th October (27th Tishrei 5715) at the Beethoven Hall, on 210-14 East 5th Street, New York. As before, it was successful - both in the number of participants and in the collection of funds. That same year, on 21st November, the *Częstochower Club* took steps to revive its activity by [appointing] new officials, as well as by making preparations for a *Purim* [Ball] and other enterprises.



The pioneering work of the previous years began to bear fruit in 1955. The Executive's meetings were more frequent. The number of functions remained the same, but on a wider scale. Contact with the *Częstochower landsmannschaften* throughout the world also intensified. One very important happening in the Relief's activity of 1955 was the decision to publish a journal dedicated to Flw Raphael Federman's 50 years of social activity.

At the Relief's meeting on 15th May 1955, a permanent committee was selected, which had the task of preparing materials for the planned journal. An editorial collegium was also elected, containing the following persons: H. Zygas, Ch. Rotman, and Zvi Rosenvein. To the Jubilee Committee were voted H. Zygas, J.B. Silver, Ch. Rotman, Flw Helen Czarny, Flw [Mrs] W. Chajutin, Flw Chaskiel Dauman, H. Szoham, Flw Aron Frymor, L. Chojnacki, Flw Kuba Goldberg from Canada, Flw Jakub Hofman and Flw Zvi Rosenvein. To the committee's executive were elected Flw H. Zygas - Chairman; Flws H. Rotman and J.B. Silver - Vice-Presidents; Flw Chaskiel Dauman - Treasurer and Flw Zvi Rosenvein - Secretary. According to the goals which were subsequently set, the publication of the journal was to bring revival to the Relief's activity and, at the same time, serve as a completion of the book *Czenstochover Yidn*. This was also the jubilee celebrant's wish.

The scope [of the project], as well as the work of gathering materials for the planned journal, opened broad horizons for the ensuing activity. The correspondence, which had hitherto been held with the *landsmannschaften* around the globe, which had widened vigorously, once more confirmed that there is a lively interest among the *Częstochowers* throughout the world to maintain the name of the *Old Home*, and that there is a desire to maintain the *Częstochower* family around the globe. These ideas and feelings are particularly expressed in the imprimatur, [which states] that a journal such as this, in which the history of the Jewish congregation in *Częstochowa* is once more portrayed, is a necessity. These ideas and feelings stimulated the Journal Committee in New York to commence intensive work regarding the gathering of materials, as well as broadening the Relief's activity.

The attendance and the proceeds of the undertakings - the New Year's Ball, the *Purim* Ball on 12th March [and] the Third *Seder* on 10th April - surpassed those of the previous years. The annual Memorial Service was held on 23rd October 1955.

The sum of aid given also grew. Up to September, the Relief gave out close to \$500 for *Częstochowers* in various countries. Loans were given out to newly-arrived, food parcels were sent to Israel [and] medication and monetary support to Poland, France and Australia. The Relief further promoted the sale of the book *Czenstochover Yidn*. Concurrently, work continued in the fields of attracting new forces both to the Relief's activity and to the Jubilee Committee. The Relief also honoured its deceased members and organised Memorial Evenings for them (Aba Kaufman, peace be upon him).



The year 1956 started with further intensive activity around the journal and aid.

In the report delivered at the meeting on 27th May, it was stated that over 20 *landsleit* in Israel, Poland, Australia and France had, until then, received required aid. In New York itself, the Relief undertook an operation [viz. fundraiser] for sick *landsleit*. Our *landsleit* in Israel and Poland, once again, expressed the wish to maintain the regular exchange of letters with the Relief.

The work around the *Częstochower* journal moved forward. The sum of money which had come in, until the meeting, had focused a great desire and interest on the operation surrounding the journal. Flw Chune Gliksman took a very active part in the work. A large number of the articles were also already typeset. A new Executive was elected - Flw H. Zygas - Chairman; Flw R. Federman - Secretary; Flws Ch. Gliksman and M. Grauman; Roman Lewkowicz - Treasurer; Flw Ch. Rotman - Minutes Secretary and J.B. Silver – Honorary President.

In order to make the work more effective, the new administration co-opted a group of people, who were required to carry out the decisions in the quickest and best possible manner. Those in this Co-Executive included Karl Wargon, Ch. Rotman, Isaac Sternberg, Zvi Rosenvein, H. Czarny, Aron Frymor, Julius Sztal, Jack Kremski, R. Fortel, J. Forberg [and] H. Szoham.

The functions, which the Relief conducted, were a *Purim* Ball and a *Third Seder*. The annual Memorial Service took place on 21st October, at the Roosevelt Auditorium, on 100 East 17th Street, New York. The net proceeds of the undertakings and of the Memorial Service were completely put towards aid.



During the first months of 1957, the work surrounding the book again moved forward. New material arrived and the greater part of the articles, which had come in until then, was already typeset. From the contents of the minutes of the meetings held, we may conclude that the first necessary steps for the celebration of the book's publishing had been made. The response to the project of this book, from *landsleit* around the world, was again stimulating.

In 1957, the Relief had before it a new, difficult task - to assist *landsleit* to leave Poland. For this, not only were material means required, but also an entire array of legal and juridical procedures. The Relief was, in this regard, in contact with the Jewish Workers Committee and did anything in its power to carry these requests through to their fruition. The appeals were in two directions - the first was to provide support in the actual leaving of Poland, while the second was to aid in settling down in the new place of habitation, to wit - Israel. At the same time, appeals continued to arrive regarding aid to *landsleit* living in Poland and in Israel. The urgency of the aid may be seen from the fact that, at every meeting which was held from the beginning of the year, appeals for help were discussed.

By May, two functions had already been held:

- a) a gathering of members on 9th March, at which *landsleit* had the opportunity of seeing each other, and
- b) the *Third Seder*, which took place on 21st April, at the Academy Hall, on 853 Broadway.

Plans were concurrently already made for further undertakings, such as the annual Memorial Service, the New Year's Ball, and other gatherings of members.

The Relief donated \$50 to the United Jewish Appeal and congratulated the daily newspaper *Forverts* on its [60th] anniversary. Intensive work continues to spread the book *Czenstochover Yidn*. Enquiries about the book arrive from Canada, France and other states here in this country.

The Relief continues to be in touch with the sister organisations and endeavours to activate them.

The Relief's activity in the months of May and June mainly focused on two purposes:

- a) aid for *landsleit* in Poland and also for those desiring to leave Poland and make their way to Israel, and for those who are already in Israel as well, and
- b) preparing for forthcoming functions.

For the first goal, a special committee was co-opted to the Executive. The body, which had been formed, took upon itself the task to conduct an emergency campaign for funds. They formulated a letter, dated 3rd May 1957, 500 copies of which were sent to individuals and *landsmannschaften* across America. The contents of the letter particularly drew attention to the fate of the *landsleit* who were forced to leave their homes in Poland and to their situation after arriving in Israel. Responses to this letter brought in \$500, which was wired, in July, to the Secretary of the Organisation of Cześćochowa Jews in Israel, P.I. [sic Abram] Gotlib. *Landsleit* Chune Gliksman and J. Gelber distinguished themselves in the collection of funds. Besides this, the Relief sent out individual support to *landsleit* in Poland and Israel in the sum of nearly \$250.

The urgent call for help, for a while, laid the work on the book to one side. The Relief's activists perceived that, first of all, requests for aid needed to be fulfilled and, only afterwards, [could they] commence working on other enterprises. It is quite true that the first depends on the second - without undertakings, there could be no means with which to provide aid. The necessity, however, temporarily shoved aside any thoughts of enterprises. What was now needed was to reformulate the Relief's goals and tasks. The *Cześćochower landsleit*, once more, needed to be awoken and be requested to maintain the existence of the Relief and its activities.

At a meeting, which took place on 25th May 1957, the Relief's goals and tasks were formulated by Fellows R. Federman, H. Zygas, Zvi Rosenvein, Frajermauer, Wargon and others. The sum total of the opinions voiced was to continue with the Relief's work. At this same meeting, it also became known that the book by Raphael Federman, *On the Shores of the Warta and East River*, would soon appear. (It was published at the end of May - beginning of June 1957).

At the meeting on 11th June, the Relief decided upon the activity for [the next] six months. At this meeting, the representative of the Cześćochowa branch of the *Arbeiter Ring* and of the Czenstochover Young Men also took part. Both delegates promised to support the Relief's activities and, primarily, to take part in the relief operation for those *landsleit* who were leaving Poland to settle in Israel. At this meeting, an array of personal requests for support were also agreed to. Letters arrived from individuals and *landsmannschaften* in America [and] in France, in which they pleaded with the New York *landsmannschaft* to do everything possible to carry on with the relief work for *landsleit* in Poland and, especially, in Israel. In closing, plans were also made for the forthcoming events during the last months of the year, such as the Memorial Service [and] the celebration of the publication of the book and also for the New Year's Ball.

Twenty gatherings over the course of twelve months, from June 1957 to June 1958, demonstrate the scope of the activities of the New York United Czenstochover Relief.

Before that time, between June 1956 and November 1957, the Relief helped 52 *landsleit*, in the sum of \$1,763! Orders, from *landsleit*, to commemorate their nearest in the memorial part of [this] book, *Czenstochov*, totalled \$2,545.50, from 231 individuals.

On 17th November 1957, elections were held for a new Executive. [Those] elected were Chairman - Karl Wargon; Vice-Chairman - H. Szoham; Secretary - Chonon Kiel; Assistant Secretary - R. Federman; Recording Secretary - Josef Gelber; and Treasurer - Helen Czarny. Those elected to the Board were J. Dauman, A.L. Bomba, J. Goldberg, Julius Sztal, Joseph Sztal, Josef Gelber, R. Federman, K. Wargon, Joe Forberg, H. Szoham, Chonon Kiel, J.B. Silver, H. Zygas, S. Szacher, R. Lewkowicz, Jack Kremiski, R. Frajermauer, Chune Gliksman and the Zolondz brothers.

In Summary

The Relief's activity is a small link in the great chain of aid and support which the Jewish community in America conducts. Just like the responsibility for the material existence of needy Jewish individuals and groups worldwide has fallen upon the American Jewry, thus the answerability for aid to *Czestochower landsleit*, wherever they may only be, has fallen upon the *Czestochowers* in America and Canada.

The privilege of a relatively good life situation and stable economic conditions, and the enjoyment of political freedom and human rights, lay upon us special obligations. If we, here in this God-blessed land, have been able to bring our path of martyrdom to an end, and break our wanderer's staff, we must remember those who have not succeeded in finding a resting place for their broken souls and bodies.

The call of a *landsmann* for food or for medicine or for a loan as an aid with which to set up a home for himself, or a workshop from which he may draw a livelihood – such an appeal is a reminder that there are still enough broken hearts and that enough bitter tears are still being shed. We, here, cannot give these people [all] that which they would wish to have. [Even] the largest amounts of charity and aid cannot [completely] satisfy the needs of the sufferers. We can, however, give something more than money, and this is **goodwill** through the support and aid that the Relief has been able to administer over the course of its existence. We need to remember this and we must not lose it. The force and instrument for this is the Relief.

The Executive of the United Czenstochover Relief Committee in New York

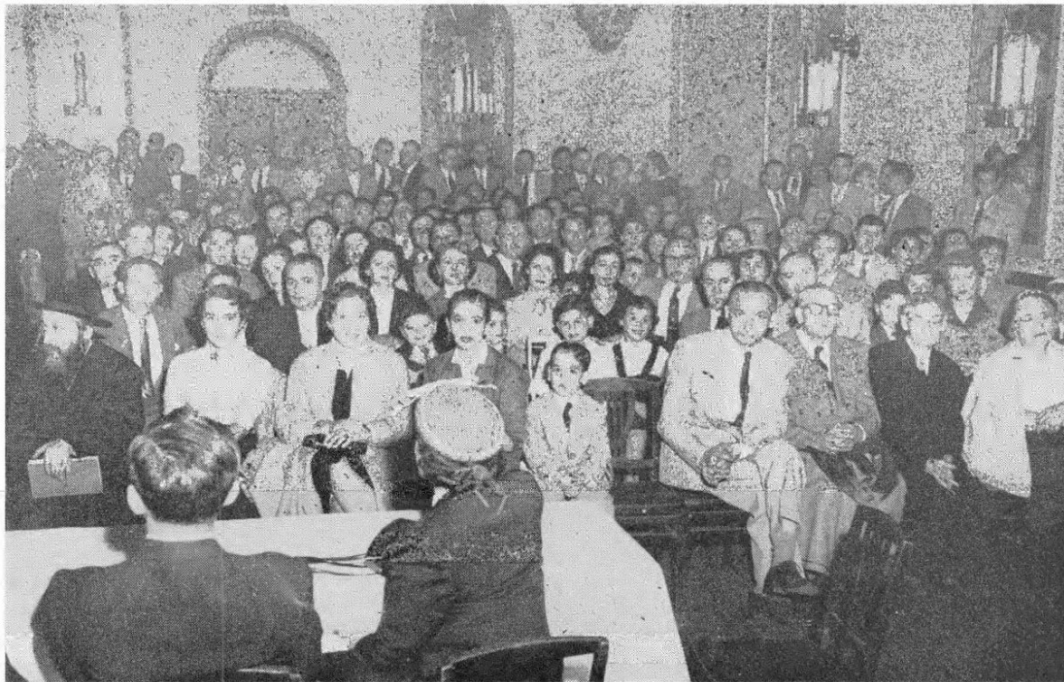


*Standing [R. to L.]: Zvi Rosenvein, Jakub Ber Silver, Sztal, Mr Czarny, Mrs Czarny, A.L. Bomba, J. Sztal, Chojnacki.
Sitting: R. Lewkowicz, Chonon Kiel, Raphael Federman, Kopl Wargon, Gelber, Szoham, [and] Chune Gliksman.*

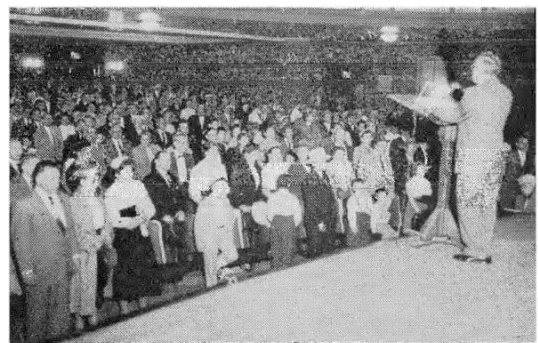


*Standing: Jakub Ber silver, Raphael Federman, Chonon Kiel, Gelber, Szoham, Chune Gliksman, Sztal, [and] Kopl Wargon.
Sitting: Sztal, Mrs Sztal, Mrs Kiel, Mrs Gelber, Mrs Szoham, Mrs Fradel Gliksman, [and] Mrs Wargon.*

The Audience at the Memorial Service in New York in 1954



*The Memorial Service in New York, in 1955.
Presiding: H. Zygas and Zvi Rosenvein.
Raphael Federman is speaking.*



*The 1954 Memorial Service.
Raphael Federman is speaking.*



Dauman and his wife



Herman Zygas



The Executive at the 1954 Memorial Service

The Audience at the Memorial Service in New York in 1954



Miss Gelber recites



*The committee of the Purim Ball,
which was held on 28th February 1953*



The boy Kiel asks the "Four Questions"



1958 Third Seder Presidium in New York