

The Activity of the *Częstochower Landsleit* in Argentina

Among the Jews from Poland, who wandered to Argentina in the first emigration years of the 20th century, we find no Jews from Częstochowa.

Only in 1914 did the first Częstochowa Jews appear in Argentina. These were individuals, who did not even think to organise themselves. Of that period, not so much as a trace has remained - we have no information about them at all.

A more noticeable Jewish-*Częstochower* emigration began in the mid-1920's. There was a crisis in Poland. The stream of emigration to America, which had always been a considerable one, was limited by American laws and a larger emigration to Argentina began in general. Consequently, among the immigrants, there were already more significant groups of *Częstochowers*. Incidentally, certain individuals came here with the intention of actually travelling, from here, to the United States (such possibilities existed then) - but they remained here, settled down and, in fact, put down roots.

It is precisely from these immigrants that the first nucleus of a *Częstochower landsleit* organisation was formed - this was in 1929. The newly-arrived tried to stick together, to help out one another. Whoever had arrived months earlier was already considered one who could, and *should*, assist the fresher ones, the "greener" ones. The principal activity and goals of this first association were, in fact, **to aid** those who had arrived. One needed to give the newcomer the first directions, give him a roof over his head, to help him out [and] to enable him to take the first step towards settling down. It was precisely this important work that the association conducted at the time. But there was a lack of routine. Misunderstandings ensued and even quarrels. For some time, the association held functions, from which it also had an income and, from these proceeds, it aided the immigrants and gave them loans (not to be returned, in fact). This, however, was not for long.

The *Częstochower* immigrant, then, showed great communal interest in the Organisation. When he needed aid, the association was good. Once he stood on his own two feet, he exhibited indifference. The "differences of opinion", which prevailed at the time among the activists, also surely contributed to the apathy.

The association ceased to exist. Only in 1934 was the initiative renewed to revive the association.

This was during the period of intensified, political persecution in Poland - the times when the *Sanacja* had become invigorated and a wave of persecutions - both of a political character as well as antisemitic - flooded Poland. Aid activity for Częstochowa begins. There were no longer any goals for the newcomers, but sending help to the *Old Home* - not just help, but for designated purposes. This association, under the name of "*Częstochower Patronage*", joined in the operations of the MOPR [International Red Aid]. This activity created a definite echo. A series of [fundraising] functions were held with very great success, quite considerable sums collected, which the "*Patronage*" sent to Poland.

A much reduced group was active in this Patronage - an element which had not yet firmly established itself. It would befall the activists, after a whole day of work, to make the rounds of the houses, levying the monthly membership fee which consisted of an amount of pesos ^{*1}.

This activity continued for a couple of years. In 1936, the association entered a new phase. A large group from Bełchatów arrived in Argentina - a very lively element - and, as two neighbouring cities, in order to carry out joint activity with combined forces, we, the *Częstochowers*, united with the *Bełchatówers*. In fact, this unification brought about a revival to the association - very good successes were indeed achieved in the limited relief goals which we had.

However, this alliance did not last long - only for a year. Who knows for what reason? It was possibly due to the fact that they were more united amongst themselves [and] had the means to conduct an organisation of their own. After that year in unison, the *Bełchatówers* "made *Shabbes* for themselves"^{*2} - they left the association [and] created their own. The association, in general, fell through once again.

[During] the War years - the dark period of Hitler's reign and the occupation of Poland by the Brown Beast^{*1} - we were cut off from our hometown. News of the sorrows and cruelties arrived, but they were not at all clear. There was nothing we could do. Only in 1943, when the free countries started receiving accurate and authentic reports of the Nazi barbarities in the occupied lands, did we find out about **the destruction of Częstochowa**. A sentiment of [desire] to aid awakened [and] a series of mutual prejudices are set aside. It becomes clear to every *Częstochower* that this is a time when one must not stand on the side-lines.

The ***Częstochower* association** is reorganised. Both the former activists and the newly-interested feel that this is the right time to coordinate themselves and to form an association. It is actually from this time that the current association exists, which includes the large majority of the *Częstochowers* in Buenos Aires, where almost all the *Częstochowers* reside.

We began precisely with a broad relief operation. Immediately, all the *Częstochowers* taxed themselves with higher sums - some in cash and others in instalments. True, we had no address to which to send this money. We awaited further news of how and to whom to send these funds. We waited to find out whether there *was* anyone for whom to send.

As soon as the first opportunity emerged, we indeed began sending over the aid. We sent generously and made use of all possibilities.

When it became possible to be in direct contact with Poland, we sent aid, sending it directly to Częstochowa through the Joint. When opportunities began to be generated for the *Surviving Remnant* to be able to rebuild their disrupted living conditions through work facilities, and the news reached us that there was an opportunity to aid with machines and material, we helped establish the Jewish shoemakers' cooperative in Częstochowa, which was to be named "Argentina".

Aid in money, in materials [and] in medicines went out from us to our *Częstochower* brethren - to Poland, to those who had wandered to Sweden (they arrived in that country from the Nazi death-factories) and also to the refugees who had been on the ship Exodus [1947] and had ended up in Cyprus.

^{*1} [TN: The conversion rate at the time was about 15 pesos for one pound sterling.]

^{*2} [TN: Expression meaning that they separated themselves, and began acting alone.]

^{*1} [TN: Derogatory reference to the Nazis, probably due to the colour of the shirts of the paramilitary Sturmabteilung (SA), who were colloquially called "Brownshirts."]

It would, however, be erroneous to imagine that our *Częstochower Landsleit* Society limited itself solely to export relief. Of course, the stream of aid flowed, before anything else, to the severely tried brothers and sisters who had been saved. However, we did not forget our local needs - and these existed and [continue to] exist. We will not speak here in detail, but let it be known that there were a great many cases also among our locals, who required speedy and substantial aid. And the association indeed aided them.

But in [sic besides] the material aid for individuals, the Society's activities also included aid to communal institutions - both philanthropic and cultural. Within the Society's budget, there are specific sums for the Jewish relief and culture institutions of our local community in Argentina.

Aid for the State of Israel is a chapter on its own. We always remember the State of Israel. At the annual festivities on *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*, a fundraiser is held and half of this goes to *Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael*. A while back, when an "urgent emergency campaign" for the State of Israel was conducted, the Society - apart from the regular aid [and] what each individual in the Society donates to the Zionist funds - an extra amount of 8,000 Argentinean pesos was also generated.

Regarding the post-War period, there is the story of the list of saved Jews. Through the mediation of the Society for the Protection of [Jewish] Immigrants^{*2}, we received a list of thousands of Jews liberated from the *Częstochowa* camp. At first, we thought that these were *Częstochowa* Jews and we happily took the list. But it turned out that, [although] these many thousands of Jews had in fact been liberated in *Częstochowa* - from the local Nazi HASAG camp, they were Jews who had come from other cities in Poland and even many from outside Poland. There was an immense interest in this list. Hundreds of people found out that there were lists of Jewish survivors. The Society for the Protection of [Jewish] Immigrants only had one copy. We, the *Częstochowers*, then took the obligation upon ourselves and made a great number of copies, which we made available at our association. Literally thousands of people besieged the Society, seeking their relatives. From all the *landsleit* organisations, people came to look for their nearest ones and we have, indeed, an entire array of instances to mention by which, thanks to this, the relatives being sought were located.

We also mention another initiative in connection with the chapter of the Destruction. Straight after the War, we received, from our *landsmann* Liber Brener, a series of materials, photographic images and documents from *Częstochowa* from before and during the occupation. We intended to publish this work. We were already preparing to carry this out, when we discovered that the local "Publishing House of the Polish Jews"^{*3} was in readiness to publish the book by Szlomo Waga on the destruction of *Częstochowa*. We could not undertake the publishing of two books [simultaneously]. Seeing that Waga's book was already all set, we came to an understanding with the Publishing House of the Polish Jews and we cooperated with them in issuing Waga's book.

Also included in our association's regular work is the annual Memorial Service for our martyrs.

We have observed this sacred day over the course of all these years. We go by the destruction date of 11th Tishrei, i.e., the day following *Yom Kippur*. Year after year, the local *Częstochower* family comes together and we evoke our hallowed and pure ones in public.

^{*2} [TN: - Sociedad de Protección a los Inmigrantes Israelitas (SOPROTIMIS).]

^{*3} [TN: Viz. the publishing house of the Central Union of Polish Jewry in Argentina (Unión Central Israelita Polaca en la Argentina).]

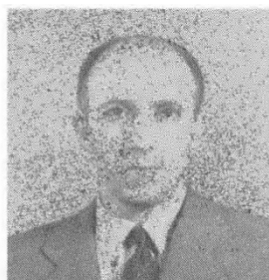
Some of the Leaders of the *Częstochower Landsleute* in Argentina



I. Szylit



Worsztel



J. Amsterdam



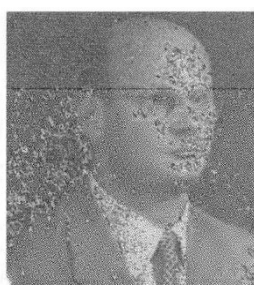
M. Majerowicz



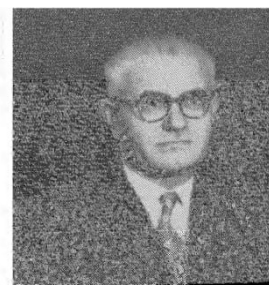
B. Galster



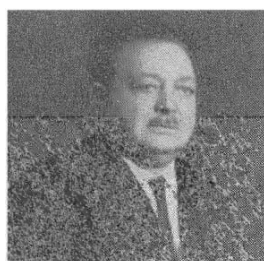
L. Rozenberg



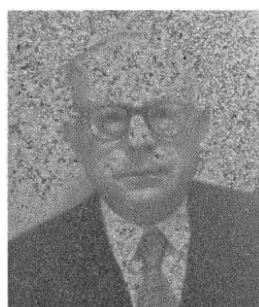
M. Fiszer



J. Jakubowicz



A. Kerner



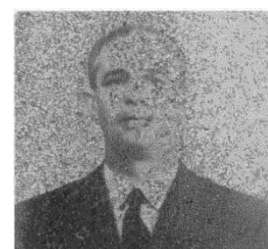
E. Majerowicz



[TN: Top: *Częstochower Landsleit* Society and Vicinity;
Middle: names of individuals;
Bottom: Remember the 40,000
Częstochower Martyrs.]



I. Jakubowicz



D. Laskowski

On the monument to the Six Million Jews, which is in the local Jewish cemetery, there is also a special bronze plaque for our *Częstochower* Martyrs. Apart from this, we also have a plaque which is put up as the pulpit during the Memorial Ceremony for our martyrs.

Another function, which is held every year, is on the day which the State of Israel was established. During the month within which this date is celebrated, our association holds a special evening of festivities dedicated to *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*. Apart from speeches and surveys, we make properly merry indeed.

Today, our association is one of those which have avoided the different schisms - we have avoided divergences in the political field. **All** the *Częstochowers* belong to it, regardless of their ideological or political convictions. The Society's primary characteristic is that we maintain the memory of the hometown of all of us, *Częstochowa*, and we do everything, whenever necessary, to help our own, wherever they may be.

Up to 120 families belong now to the Society - which means about 500 souls. Only a small number of individuals are from nearby *shtetls* in the vicinity of the city of *Częstochowa*.

Outside the Society, there are also *Częstochowers* to be found, who have long-lost the connection. These are people who cannot join any association, for different reasons - often purely, family reasons. We also encounter these estranged persons at our larger functions - primarily at the Memorial Service. We appeal to them, as well, during broader activities, and more than one of them then exhibits his bond with the remaining *Częstochower* public.

The latest electoral meeting, at which the administration of our society was chosen, took place on 1st October 1957. Those elected to the administration were:

Chairman: Izrael Jakubowicz
Vice-Chairman: Eliaz Majerowicz
Secretary: Mordche Majerowicz
Minutes Secretary: Mojsze Fiszer
Treasurer: Leon Rozenberg
Deputy Treasurer: Benjamin Galster
Members of Administration:
Dawid Laskowski
Mojsze Wajnholc
Joel Amsterdam
Abram Kerner
Szulim Plawner
Izaak Szylit
Dawid Wrocławski
Jakób L. Jakubowicz

One who had [also] been elected, Mojsze Kantor, emigrated to the State of Israel a few months ago.

* * *

Over the course of our existence, we have registered the loss of one of the best among us - this is Szulim Wirsztel - to whose credit belongs the founding and the leading of our association. He was torn from our ranks on 3rd September 1948, but all *Częstochowers* remember him and, to this day, mention him with reverential awe.