

Where is home?

*"I was surrounded by an incomprehensible, unknown world
and the enormity of its problems. I could not imagine
that life after the war would prove to be so complicated and difficult [...] I
had to learn to recognise, analyse,
choose – to simply live."*¹

*"Quo Vadis² was a very pertinent question for the surviving Częstochowa Jews.
Choosing a path of life, after the Holocaust, was extremely complicated for Jews as a
community, as well as for each of us personally".³*

This was how Arye Edelist⁴ recalled the moment of his liberation and the accompanying dilemmas.

The surviving Jews faced many dilemmas. 17th January 1945 was an extraordinary day for Jews in Częstochowa. Zygmunt Rolat⁵ recalled that moment:

*"I was overcome with a euphoria. I was free! I could go anywhere that I wanted. I could
do anything that I wanted."*⁶

However, at this joyous moment, the survivors were plagued by many contradictory emotions. The conflagration of war had wiped out, from the face of the earth, most of their nation and almost everything that was quintessential to it before the Holocaust. The phenomenon, about which F. Tych, writes was that in which everyone found themselves – the Jewish nation was almost entirely murdered, which is why the number of five thousand surviving Jews, in the one place, was so impressive.

The survivors never actually freed themselves from the trauma of the Holocaust of their loved ones and their nation. As Irit Amiel⁷, a Jewish writer, with Częstochowa origins, put it, they emerged from the conflagration "singed". They had been scorched by the flame, which had

¹ H. Birenbaum, *Powrót do ziemi praajców...*, p. 6, [in:] E. Koźmińska-Frejlik, *Kondycja ocalałych. Adaptacja do rzeczywistości powojennej (1944–1949)*, [in:] M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (ed.), F. Tych (ed.), *Następstwa zagłady Żydów. Polska 1944–2010*, Lublin 2011, p. 152.

² Quo vadis (Latin) – Where are you going?

³ A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia*, [in:] J. Mizgalski (ed.), J. Sielski red.), *Żydz...*, op. cit., p. 206.

⁴ Arye Edelist – a Częstochowa Holocaust survivor, who emigrated to Israel where, among other activities, he served as Chairman of the Association of Częstochowa Jews in Israel.

⁵ Zygmunt Rolat – born in 1930 in Częstochowa as Zygmunt Rozenblat, a businessman, Polish-Jewish social activist and philanthropist, a patron of art and culture, an activist in Polish-Jewish dialogue, President of the World Society of Częstochowa Jews and Their Descendants (with its headquarters in New York), a member of the Council of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. During the German occupation, among others, he lost his parents and brother. He managed to survive in the ghettos and in the HASAG-Pelcery labour camp. Following liberation, (thanks to the help of Jerzy Einhorn, whose brother was Zygmunt Rolat's closest friend), via France and Germany, he emigrated to the USA.

⁶ See C.K. Szymański, R. Stefaniak, *Zygmunt Rolat. Honorowy Obywatel Miasta Częstochowy*, Częstochowa 2016, p. 79.

⁷ Irit Amiel was born, into an assimilated family, in 1931 in Częstochowa. She survived the war on the "Aryan side". In 1947, she left for Palestine. She translated, into Hebrew, the works of Polish authors. As an author herself, she became well-known for her collection of stories entitled "Singed".

passed them by, but whose traces were and would be indelible for the rest of their lives. It was not easy to understand. Why had fate (God) permitted me to experience this?

Personal losses were painfully and deeply felt, and it was difficult to free oneself from the frights and fears experienced under the occupation. As Eli Zborowski⁸ recalled,

*"I was always afraid at night, when I couldn't sleep. Often, I had nightmares that dogs were attacking me."*⁹

The joy of liberation was incomplete. Apart from the trauma of war, the mental mutilation and the loss of loved ones, the question arose of how to now live. The level of this question was at that of everyday existence. The survivors had no means of subsistence. This concerned both the Częstochowa Jews and those who been brought to Częstochowa by the Germans.

During that first period following liberation, their principal desire was to search for a relative. These searches made it clear, to the Jews, that the Germans had not only committed a slaughter on their families and friends, but also on their entire nation.

The younger survivors found it easier to adapt to this. After years of enslavement and fear, they wanted to study. They wanted to "conquer the world". Such an attitude to the reality, by some Jewish youth, is confirmed by Jerzy Einhorn's¹⁰ memoirs, who, as he himself admits, was mainly thinking about how to enrol into a Częstochowa *gimnazjum* as soon as possible and to continue his education, which had been interrupted by the German occupation.¹¹ At the time, Einhorn was nineteen-years-old. A few years younger was Zygmunt Rolat (still using the name Zygmunt Rozenblatt), who, like Einhorn, had survived the war in HASAG-Pelcery. He also dreamed of an education.¹²

So, why did they both emigrate? Why, together with them, did most of the liberated Jews, from Częstochowa and from outside the city, emigrate?

Some, who had come from outside of Częstochowa, for obvious reasons, almost immediately began searching for relatives and friends. However, the Jews of Częstochowa had to face a new reality. Before the War, they were an important part of the material and spiritual

⁸ Eli Zborowski was born in Żarki, near Częstochowa, and was a student at the Częstochowa Hebrew Gimnazjum. During the War, among other activities, he was the liaison amongst ŻOB groups operating in Warsaw, Radomsko and Częstochowa. Following liberation, he emigrated to the USA, where he became a respected businessman. He was president of the International Yad Vashem Association and vice-president of the World Federation of Polish Jews. In his constant efforts to improve Polish-Jewish relations, he was supported by his wife, Elżbieta Mundlak-Zborowska, the great-granddaughter of Rabbi Nachum Asz. Eli Zborowski died in 2012.

⁹ G. Berman, R. Berman, *A Life of Leadership - Eli Zborowski: From the Underground to Industry to Holocaust Remembrance*, Wydawnictwo KTAV, 2011, p. 52.

¹⁰ Jerzy Einhorn was born in Częstochowa in 1925. He died in Stockholm in 2000. He was a doctor and a socio-political activist. He survived the Holocaust in the Częstochowa ghetto and the HASAG-Pelcery labour camp. After the War, he matriculated in Częstochowa and began studying medicine in Łódź, eventually emigrating to Sweden. He was an oncologist and co-created the Swedish social welfare system. He was one of those who decided as to who would be awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He sat in the *Riksdag* – the parliament of the Kingdom of Sweden and was one of the most popular public figures in Sweden.

¹¹ J. Einhorn, *Wybrany, aby żyć*, Gdańsk 2002.

¹² See C.K. Szymański, R. Stefaniak, *Zygmunt...*, op. cit., pp. 78-88.

landscape of Częstochowa. The barbaric madness of the Germans had destroyed this world. The Nazis had murdered most of the Jewish community and had greatly maimed those who, against all odds, had survived. They were lonely people, deprived of family, starved, sick, often physically and mentally mutilated and without a roof over their heads.

Usually someone else was now living in their apartments and houses, which had survived the War. Polish Christians now considered these apartments as their property. According to the accounts of surviving Jews, the reception which they received was not very friendly. "According to most sources, the liberated Jews were greeted with the words, '*So many of you are still alive?*' and were thrown out of their own homes".¹³ It should be stated that this was not always the case. For example, the Einhorn family returned to their empty apartment and a Polish friend returned, to them, all the valuables which they had left for safekeeping.¹⁴

At this point, it may be worth looking at Częstochowa as a whole. The entry of the Russians, in January 1945, took place without any major, material damage. The Germans, who were preparing their defence, were taken by surprise at the speed and strength of the Soviet offensive. Finally, the frontal attack from the Mstów side, which was led by Major Siemion Khrokhiaikov's 2nd Tank Battalion, caused the city to fall into Soviet hands without much resistance from the previous occupiers.¹⁵

Building destruction in Częstochowa, due to the war, was relatively low.¹⁶ The quarter of the city, where the Germans had created a ghetto, suffered the most. Częstochowa entered the post-War period with a spatial shape not much different to the previous one, but with a smaller population, devastated industry and unfavourable housing conditions.¹⁷ During Nazi occupation, pre-War factories and industrial plants had been largely destroyed. Of those which survived, most were now closed. Only those, which contributed to war purposes, had been operational. Living and working conditions were extremely difficult. Raw materials and machinery were scarce. Transport was not required and there was a shortage of food supplies.¹⁸

Immediately following the entry of the Soviet army, a city war-command was established, headed by Colonel Piotr Jurczenko.¹⁹ Częstochowa communists took over administrative power. Initially, Stanisław Langier (PPR²⁰) became mayor of the city, but he was soon replaced by Jan Wolański (PPR). The local authorities were absolutely subordinate to the military command. This meant that, among other things, the supply of provisions went, firstly, to the

¹³ F. Karay, *W cieniu Czarnej Madonny. Obóz Pracy Przymusowej Hasag-Apparatebau w Częstochowie*, 2006, p. 305 (translated from the English by A. Piśkiewicz, 2014).

¹⁴ See J. Einhorn, *Wybrany...*, op. cit., pp. 160–170.

¹⁵ As the result of street fighting, five Soviet tanks were destroyed and three were seriously damaged. Twenty-eight Soviet soldiers died and forty-two were wounded. See J. Płowecki, *Wyzwolenie Częstochowy 1945*, Warsaw 1973, pp. 65–66.

¹⁶ See J. Braun, *Częstochowa. Urbanistyka i architektura*, Warsaw 1977.

¹⁷ The density indicator usually exceeded two people per room. For more, see J. Braun, *Częstochowa, Urbanistyka...*, op. cit., p. 93; R. Matysiakiewicz, *Perspektywiczno-przestrzenny i społeczno-gospodarczy rozwój Częstochowy*, [in:] *Częstochowa jej rola i rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy w latach 1918–1978*, Częstochowa 1979, WOKI academic conference materials, vol. III, p. 128.

¹⁸ D. Jarosz, *Częstochowa w latach 1945–1947*, [in:] K. Kersten (ed.), *Częstochowa, Dzieje Miasta i Klasztoru Jasnogórskiego. Vol. 4 – Dzieje miasta i Klasztoru po 1945 roku*, Częstochowa 2007, pp. 12–15.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 13.

²⁰ Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party) – a communist group established on 5th January 1942 in Warsaw by Polish communists, who came from the USSR, during the occupation. As a party, it operated until December 1948.

army stationed there²¹. They also used forced consent to carry out the most ordinary robbery of tools, machinery and other property, which took place under the pretext of Russia's right to seize post-German property.²²

On a micro-scale, among others, Bronisława Proskurowska encountered this problem on the first night following liberation. She described it in this manner:

*"...we went into the building at ul. Kilińskiego 28, from where the Germans had evicted us. We wanted to occupy an empty apartment. There, we found German greatcoats, which we put on, because we were cold. In the morning, the Russians came and ordered us to hand everything over them, because it was their 'trophy'".*²³

The Proskurowski couple decided to remain in Częstochowa but, in the first months after liberation, many Jews wanted to leave the city. Some considered Częstochowa (and the entire country) as one big cemetery and a lost life, which they decided that they wanted to leave behind. Others simply could not fit themselves into the new reality and decided to seek happiness elsewhere. Many, having met with disdain or aggression, decided to leave Częstochowa in fear for themselves and for their relatives, who had managed to survive.

How many survivors left the city? There is no documented, complete data on this subject. The data, which is usually cited, comes from Liber Brener²⁴, who compiled a statistical summary of the Jewish population of Częstochowa, based on the reports of the Częstochowa Jewish Committee, which were submitted to the Central Committee of Polish Jews in 1956. Based on them, it can be stated, with certainty, that this number has undergone significant changes. A few months after liberation, only half of the liberated Jews remained in Częstochowa.

At the same time, from successfully liberated areas and camps, new people came to the city, only to leave it quite soon after.²⁵

*"From February 1946, a small stream began to flow into Częstochowa, as part of the repatriation of Polish citizen from the USSR. There were also Jewish Poles, who were citizens of the Second Polish Republic. This invigorating stream of repatriates, which lasted until July 1946, was not able to counter-balance the outflow."*²⁶

Those, who remained in Częstochowa, had to somehow organise themselves and begin building a new life. The situation, somehow, forced both the activists of the former underground, and members of the pre-war parties and groups, into a new wave of activity.

²¹ For example, the Russians seized coal stocks and had priority in all provisioning activities. See D. Jarosz, *Częstochowa...*, op. cit., [in:] K. Kersten (ed.), *Częstochowa, Dzieje Miasta...*, op. cit., pp. 12–15.

²² See ibidem, p. 13

²³ B. Proskurowska, *Wspomnienia*, [in:] J. Mizgalski (ed.), J. Sielski (ed.), *Żydzi...*, op. cit., p. 348.

²⁴ Liber Brener – pedagogue, social and political activist, columnist. From 1929, he lived in Częstochowa. He was a Bund activist. During the occupation, he was one of the most active in the underground, running an illegal children's club and an underground school. By order of the Bund, he conducted underground activities for the party throughout the occupation in Częstochowa. After the city was liberated, he headed the Jewish regional committee in Częstochowa. He was one of the founders of the Jewish Cultural Association in Poland. After the war, he began publishing in Jewish magazines, as well as memoirs and academic works. He left for Israel in 1958.

²⁵ In May 1945 - 1,518 people, in December 1945 - 2,051 people, in December 1946 – 1,235 people (L. Brener's data).

²⁶ F. Tych, *Ocaleni...*, op. cit., p. 106.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Jewish community, including the Jews living in Częstochowa, was not a monolith – neither before nor after the War. The Jews were quite diverse in terms of political views, attitudes towards religion, as well as towards Poland and Poles. This situation did not change after the War.

At this point, it is worth noting that the revival of Jewish life in Poland coincided with the creation of the foundations of the new Polish state. The new authorities struggled with huge problems, initially relating to war activities, and then to strengthening their authority and rebuilding the country. Nevertheless, they did not forget about the Jewish community.

In a “manifesto”, already published in July 1944 by the PKWN²⁷, there was a provision what stated that:

“The Jews, following the brutal extermination by the occupier, will be guaranteed the reconstruction of the existence, as well as legal and factual equality.”

Emil Sommerstein, a pre-war member of the *Sejm* and Zionist activist, was a member of the PKWN from its inception. In August 1944, a Department to Aid the Jewish Population was established at the PKWN Presidium.²⁸ It was headed by Szlomo Herszernhorn from the Bund.²⁹

The next step was the establishment of the Provisional Central Committee of Jews in Poland which, from February 1945, was called the Central Committee of Jews in Poland.³⁰ This organisation, together with its local branches, in the period 1945-1950, became the key institution in organising Jewish life in Poland. In its efforts to improve the fate of Jews in post-War Poland, the Committee was supported by the JOINT³¹.

In Częstochowa, the main organiser of aid was the Jewish Committee, which was established by Bund activists.³²

“At the first stage, a ‘Jewish Committee’ was formed to represent the surviving Jews. To the government, the Committee was the official representative of the Jewish community and was supported by the Communist Party. The Committee also had funds for its activities and for helping the Częstochowa Jews. Committee chairman was Liber

²⁷ PKWN - Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego (Polish National Liberation Committee) - a provisional body, with executive power, operating from 21st July to 31st December 1944, dominated by communists, who worked closely together with representatives of the USSR.

²⁸ See A. Grabski, A. Rykała, *Żydzi w Polsce 1944–2010*, [in:] *Dzieje Żydów Polskich*, 2nd edition, Warsaw 2019, p. 395.

²⁹ See *ibidem*.

³⁰ See *ibidem*.

³¹ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (abbrev: JOINT) – an organisation founded in the USA in 1914, aimed at helping Jews in the Diaspora. Its funding comes mainly from donations by American Jews. In the 1940s, many of the city's inhabitants could only function thanks to the financial support received from JOINT. In 1947, its subsidies accounted for over 80% of the subsidies of both the Central Committee of Polish Jews and the Jewish Religious Congregations. In the period 1945-1948, JOINT spent nearly USD18 million in Poland. With breaks, due to the policy of the Polish government, it supports the Polish Jewish community to this day. For more, see A. Grabski, A. Rykała, *Żydzi...*, op. cit., p. 396.

³² The Bund is an organisation with long-standing pre-war traditions, with a left-wing, anti-Zionist program. (It was opposed to the movement for the return to Palestine). The Bund was an anti-religious party, advocating democracy, the secularisation of education and the socialisation of the means of production, which brought it closer to the Polish communists. The Bund advocated for cultural autonomy for Jews and the support of Yiddish language culture, thanks to which the Bundists believed that Jews would not be assimilated and would retain their separate identity.

Brener, leader of the Jewish socialist (anti-Zionist) Bund party. Its active members were Jadzia Brener (a member of the PPR), Director of the Youth and Culture Department, the lawyer Lwa Bojm³³, Abram Czarny (a member of the PPR) and others ...".³⁴



A meeting at Bund headquarters, 1945.

Photo. L. Kuszniir

The Committee, which, in January 1946, had 1,417 Jews in its ranks, and as many as 2,167³⁵ at the end of June of that year, was not the only organisation helping Jewish survivors. Already in February 1945, in Częstochowa, representatives of an organisation appeared, persuading and offering help to illegally enter Palestine.³⁶ This was done as part of an operation known as "Bricha"³⁷ or "Aliyah"³⁸.

³³ He served as Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

³⁴ A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 207.

³⁵ This number included a certain part of the population who were Jews who came from the Soviet Union. For more, see: D. Jarosz, *Częstochowa...*, p. 38, for: Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw. Records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Outline of CKŻP activity from 1st January to 30th June 1946, Warsaw 1947, ref. no. 311, pp. 25–33.

³⁶ Soon after liberation, the following organisations resumed their activities. They included: the socialist Bund, Zjednoczenie Syjonistów Demokratów "Ichud", social-democratic Poalej Syjon Prawica, Hitachduth, the religious (officially illegal) Agudat Israel. Among the Zionist activists were Chaim Birenholc, Dawid Koniempoler, Icchak Szajn, Szlomo Bromberg and H. Szymonowicz. Poalej Syjon and Agudat created kibbutzim: based on the memories of survivors. For more, see J. Mizgalski (ed.), J. Sielski (ed.), *Żydzi...*, op. cit., pp. 192–402; L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement in Częstochowa After the Second World War (1945–1956) / Osada żydowska w Częstochowie po drugiej wojnie światowej (1945–1956)* /, [in:] *Yizkor book 1958*, source: <http://czestochowajews.org/history/about-czestochowa-yizkor-books/> translated from Yiddish to English thanks to the Wolf & Dora Rajcher Memorial Fund (accessed: 2nd June 2020).

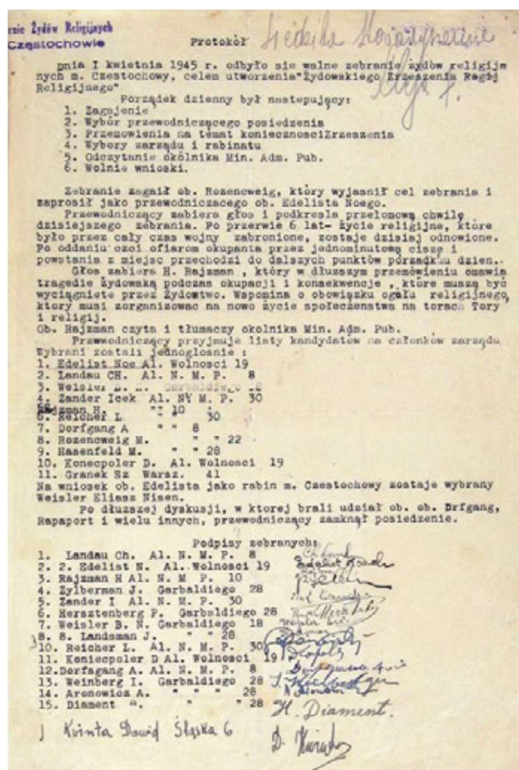
³⁷ Bricha (Escape) – an organisation which operated in 1945–1948, whose aim was to help those Jewish survivors who wished to leave Europe and reach Palestine. Its emigration operation carried the same name

³⁸ Aliyah (literally meaning "Going up") – Jewish immigration to Palestine ("returning to the homeland of their ancestors") and, after 194, to Israel. Aliyah Bet – the "Second Aliyah" took place in the years 1941–1947. F. Tych, *Ocaleni...*, op. cit., s. 104.



Board of the Jewish Religious Association in Częstochowa, 1945

Photo. L. Kusznir



Minutes of the meeting establishing the Jewish Association in Częstochowa in 1945

Straty w społeczeństwie żydowskim

Okresowy Komitet Żydowski podaje:
 Łódź Żydów zamieszkałych w Częstochowie do dnia 1. 9. 1939 r. — 30.000 osób. Od marca 1940 r. do kwietnia 1941 r. przybyło z różnych miast i miasteczek przylegających do Rzeszy — 18.000 osób. Razem w getcie przebywało — 48.000 osób. Po akcji przenrowadzonej przez Niemców w czasie od 22. 9. — 1. 11. 1942 r. pozostało z powyższej liczby — 6.500 osób, reszta, t. j. 41.500 osób, wyginęła w obozie stracenia Treblince i na miejscu. Po dniu 22. 6. 1943 r., t. j. do dnia likwidacji t. zw. małego getta, pozostało z powyższej liczby — 3.900 osób, reszta, t. j. około 2.600 osób, wymordowano w czasie likwidacji. Po dniu 19. 7. 1943 r., t. j. po dniu akcji na ul. Garibaldi i na fabry. „Hasag”, pozostało — 3.490 osób, reszta, t. j. 410 osób, wymordowano. W czasie od marca 1944 r. do grudnia 1944 r. przybyło do obozów częstochowskich (Peltzerv. Raków, Warta, Częstochowianka) — 7.500 osób. Razem było w obozach 10.990 osób. W styczniu 1945 r. wywieziono do obozów w Niemczech — 5.800 osób, ile z nich wyginęło — nie wiadomo. Zostało uwolnionych w Częstochowie — 5.190 osób. Z powyższej liczby było — urodzonych w Częstochowie 1.240 osób, stałych mieszkańców Częstochowy — 1.518 osób.

Information about Jewish community losses, „Głos Narodu” No. 185, dated 25th September 1945

Source: State Archives in Częstochowa

The Religious Jewish Congregation endeavoured to rebuild religious life.³⁹

"The chairman of the association was my father Noach Edelist, and its activists were Jechiel Landau, Lipman Reicher, Itzhak Zander, Dawid Koniecpoler and others. The association endeavoured to maintain Jewish traditions and held social activities. Rabbi Weisler was appointed as Rabbi of Częstochowa".⁴⁰

Apart from that, Zionist parties also resumed their activities. Each of these entities, in addition to pursuing their own political goals, provided social assistance to their members and their families. This multitude of active groups resulted from the policy of the "people's" authorities. According to its assumptions, Jews had become full citizens while, at the same time, enjoying a certain kind of national and cultural autonomy.

This was manifested in, among other things, the possibility of Jews legally belonging to their own political parties⁴¹ and groupings, and in recognising the competences of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland which, colloquially speaking, "received a patent" to deal with all Jewish matters.⁴² A success, which took place in mid-1946, was an inter-party compromise amongst Jewish organisations, based on which

"it was assumed that the CKŻP comprise 4 representatives of Ichud, 6 PPR, 4 Bund, 3 Poalei Zion Right, 3 Poalei Zion Left, 1 representative of Hashomer Ha'Tzair. In addition, one person from the Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB), one from He'Chalutz [and] 2 representatives Jewish Partisans' Union".⁴³

After the first departures and returns, after a short period of confusion and apathy, life began to return to normal. Already, by the beginning of March 1945, after the Committee of Częstochowa Jews officially entered the structures of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, help for survivors began to flow to Częstochowa. In Częstochowa, itself, supported by

³⁹ The Congregation resumed activity on 1st April 1945, operating at ul. Garibaldiiego 18. It was managed by Noach Edelist and, from April 1946 to April 1948, by Mosze Rozencwajg. It provided social assistance, supported the rabbi and also dealt with the *mikvah* renovation.

⁴⁰ A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁴¹ Legal operating in Poland until 1949: Zionist – "Ichud" United Social Democrats, the communist-Zionist Poalei Zion Left, the social-democratic Poalei Zion Right, communist-Zionist Hashomer Ha'Tzair, Hitachduth, the religious Mizrachi; anti-Zionist – the Jewish faction of the PPR, the socialist Bund; not legal – without registration or permission from the authorities – Zionist Revisionists (far right), the Jewish Democratic Party and the religious Agudat Israel. Despite not being legalised by the state authorities, these parties were not subjected to police repression. For more, see: A. Grabski, A. Rykała, *Żydzi...*, op. cit., pp. 395–398.

⁴² In practice, religious matters and, of course, illegal emigration of Jews, were beyond the influence of the CKŻP. The operating of the CKŻP and other Jewish groups, was used by the "people's" authorities for propaganda purposes, presenting themselves, to international public opinion, as a guarantor of true democracy in Poland.

⁴³ A. Grabski, A. Rykała, *Żydzi...*, op. cit., pp. 395–398. Związek Partyzantów Żydów powstał w listopadzie 1944 r. i był pierwszą żydowską organizacją kombatancką w Polsce. For more, see: A. Skibińska, *Powroty ocalałych i stosunek do nich społeczeństwa polskiego*, [in:] M. Adamczyk-Garbowska (ed.), F. Tych (ed.), *Następstwa...*, op. cit., p. 62.

the local authorities with whom the Bund worked closely⁴⁴, Brener's organisation was able to help many people.⁴⁵



Głos Narodu nr 125 z dnia 14.07.1945r.

**Otwarcie Domu Dziecka
przy Żyd. Komitecie w Częstochowie**

Dnia 8 b. m. odbyło się przy ul. Królewskiej uroczyste otwarcie Domu Dziecka przy Żydowskim Komitecie w Częstochowie. W nim szkoła, ochronka, internat, obojga płci — w wieku od lat 4. Do Dzieci — po największej części — z obozów, które przeszły gehennę obozów śmierci — opiekę utrzymywanie w duchu prawdziwie do-

Liczni zaproszeni goście z D. Wołańskim i wiceprez. ob. K. swieździli wzorowo urządzenie typialnie, pięknie dekorowane i jadalnie.

Pod kierownictwem Dziecka, ob. Brennerow... : bogatym programem: choralne śpiewy, deklamacje z pamiętników

Następnie odbył w czasie którego ciowych, podni... niali Starosta p... iacz. Wysokiński... il. prezes Ko... va. adw. Bo... rzew. Żyd... wyrazili gł... zoczerze... więcej m... il ras... bywat... wielki... la d...

Orphanage – children in the garden

Photo. L. Kusznir

On a daily basis, Committee activists organised material and food aid. They distributed food⁴⁶, medicines and provided medical support. They organised hostels for Jews, who were passing through the city or who had returned to the city and had nowhere to stay.⁴⁷ The disabled, invalids and those suffering from tuberculosis, of whom there were many after the War, were

⁴⁴ An example of this co-operation was, as mentioned by Brener, having representation on the National Council and on the local community Housing Commission: "Firstly, it made it possible to resolve a difficult housing problem for the majority of Jews in the city". L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ F. Tych, *Ocaleni...*, op. cit., p. 104.

⁴⁶ "Food rations were as follows: 1.) For healthy ex-prisoners - 4 kg. bread, 0.7 kg. sugar, 0.05 kg. salt and 1 kg. marmalades. 2.) For sick ex-prisoners - 15 kg. bread, 30 eggs, 15 lt. milk, 0.4 kg. butter [and] 0.8 kg. sugar. 3.) For children with parents - 16 kg. bread, 16 eggs, 0.25 kg. butter, 0.8 kg. sugar and 15 litres milk", L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Some of the Jews called this place (ul. Garibaldiego 19) "Kołchoz"; for more, see H. Wasilewicz, *Moje życie w Częstochowie*, [in:] J. Mizgalski (ed.), J. Sielski (ed.), *Żydzi...*, op. cit., p. 395.

cared for. They even managed to arrange a sanatorium for them.⁴⁸ Taking advantage of its working together with the authorities, the Committee also supported Jews to find housing and work. According to an April 1945 Committee report:

*"2,440 individuals benefitted from regular, monthly aid in the form of small cash grants [...] and food rations".*⁴⁹

Years later, L. Brener himself was especially proud of the help provided, by the Committee, to children who had survived the War and were carrying the yoke of terrible suffering and tragic experiences. Soon after the formation of the Committee, Itta ("Jadzia") Brener⁵⁰, the member responsible for children's affairs, exerted great efforts in locating Jewish children, who had been rescued by Poles, bringing them to Częstochowa and helping them to return to a normal life.

This was a big problem because some of the children, who had experienced war, had mental disorders. Others, who had become depraved by the War, had, for example, tendencies towards debauchery or theft. Still others did not want to admit that they were Jews and, finally, there were those who had been placed with Polish families and had become religious Catholics.⁵¹

Most of the small children were temporarily placed to be raised by Jewish families. The older ones were placed together under the care of Committee activist. In the summer of 1945, the Committee succeeded in establishing an orphanage.⁵² Initially, it operated in the pre-War building of the Perec school, and then later at ul. Jasnogórska 36.⁵³

"The Orphanage of the District Jewish Committee, in Częstochowa, was opened at ulica Krótka 22 on 8th July 1945. The premises also housed a Jewish school, a shelter and a dormitory for child Holocaust survivors over the age of four.

"During the opening ceremony, Częstochowa Mayor, Dr Wolański, accompanied by other representatives, visited the decorated and exemplary school rooms, the common room, the kitchen and dining room.

"The opening of this Jewish care facility was accompanied by artistic performances, which consisted of children's performances – singing, recitations and reading excerpts from camp diaries.

"During the speeches, the opinion was expressed that 'now, in a truly democratic Poland, there will be no place for any racial or religious discrimination, and that all citizens will be guided by only one, great goal – that of working and striving together for the good of Poland.'

⁴⁸ See L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁴⁹ See *ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Itta ("Jadzia") Brener's role is confirmed by the memories of survivors. For more, see A. Ofir, *Tak się zaczęło moje przyszłe życie*, [in:] J. Mizgalski (ed.), J. Sielski (ed.), *Żydzi...*, op. cit., pp. 295-297.

⁵¹ For more, see L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit. Also see: D. Jarosz, *Częstochowa...*, op. cit., p. 36, for: Central Archives of Modern Records. Records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Outline of CKŻP activity for the period 1st January and 30th June 1946, Warsaw 1947, ref. 311, pp. 25-33.

⁵² In his memoirs, A. Edelist speaks of the few orphans, while Brener counts several dozen: *"...of them, 22 were completely orphaned [children], 15 were semi-orphaned and 15 had poor parents. These children stayed at the Jewish Committee Orphanage"*. For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁵³ For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

The Chairman of the Jewish Religious Association, Edelist, also took part in the Orphanage's opening ceremony".⁵⁴

Arye Edelist, himself, despite his political aversion to the activities of the Committee, in his memoirs, appreciated its role:

"The Committee ran cultural and social activities. The Committee obtained a nice, two-storey building at ul. Jasnogórska⁵⁵, which was turned into the "Orphanage'. A few orphans, and children of those repatriated from Russia, were placed there. The Committee organised academies and other cultural events, as well as education for the children and youth. The Committee also distributed food and other necessary items".⁵⁶

The pace and scope of the Committee's aid activities were really impressive.

"Soon, the Committee began to receive more funds from the Central Jewish Committee in Poland which, at that time, still had its headquarters in Lublin. It also received substantial help from [former] Częstochowa residents, who were living abroad ...".⁵⁷

This was aid coming, mainly, from both Americas, i.e., from New York, Philadelphia or Buenos Aires in Argentina. Thanks to this, the Committee's activity was constantly expanding. In a village near Częstochowa, a convalescent home was organised, where not only was accommodation provided, but also rehabilitation and entertainment in the form of cinema or theatre. With due recognition of any physical limitations, residents [also] had the opportunity to learn a profession.⁵⁸

The Committee of Częstochowa Jews was also active in other areas. At the beginning of January 1946, utilising the pages of "Głos Narodu", the Committee conducted an information campaign aimed at searching for members of Jewish families who had survived the Holocaust. At the request of Argentinian and Canadian Jewish organisations, in January 1946, the District Jewish Committee called upon all Częstochowa Jews, living in Częstochowa or in other Polish cities, to register with the Committee in order to then establish contacts with relatives living abroad. For this purpose, lists were prepared of people and of inquiries addressed to relatives in Poland and abroad.⁵⁹

The Jewish Committee was active politically. In January 1946, on the first anniversary of the liberation of Częstochowa from German occupation, in the Polonia Hotel, it arranged a ceremonial event, with the participation of state authorities, representatives of the Polish Army and the Red Army, as well as local community representatives.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ "Głos Narodu" No.125, dated 14th July 1945.

⁵⁵ At ul. Jasnogórska 36, in the house of Zygmunt Markowicz, one of the former, richest people in Częstochowa.

⁵⁶ A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁵⁷ L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁵⁸ For more, see: *ibidem*

⁵⁹ "Głos Narodu" No. 10 dated 12th January 1946 as well as No. 15 dated 18th January 1946.

⁶⁰ "Głos Narodu" No. 19 dated 28th January 1946.

To ensure that Jewish identity and culture were maintained, a Jewish cultural centre was established. The centre provided a venue for commemorative ceremonies, meetings and entertainment. It served both adults and the youth. Particular attention was paid to the preservation of the identity of Committee activists (as well as of other organisations), basically, from the beginning.

According to Brener, already in February 1945, a commemorative meeting, of all former Jewish prisoners, was held at the “Bałtyk” cinema.⁶¹

*“On Passover 1945, a literary event took place, marking the first Pesach to be celebrated in freedom ...”.*⁶²

An evening, featuring the works of Sholem Aleichem⁶³, was also organised, as well as a very solemn ceremony commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising⁶⁴, as well as “Days of Remembrance”, relating to important moments in the history of the Częstochowa ghetto.⁶⁵ Formally, the Historical Commission was supposed to care for memory.⁶⁶ On 28th June 1945, a significantly mournful ceremony took place marking the second anniversary of the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto” in Częstochowa.

A program was planned to include a memorial service at the Jewish Religious Association at ul. Garibaldiego 18, with the participation of the Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army, Lt. Col. Kahan⁶⁷, a memorial event at the Municipal Theatre, with the participation of “Antek” - the Commander of the Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB) and a funeral procession from ul. Garibaldiego to the ruins of the ghetto, where a plaque, in honour of the murdered Częstochowa Jews, was planned to be unveiled.⁶⁸

⁶¹ For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Sholem Aleichem, actually Salomon Rabinowicz (1859-1916) – a Jewish writer, one of the Yiddish language classical writers. He left behind a legacy of forty volumes. Many of his writings have been translated into all the major languages of the world.

⁶⁴ For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁶⁵ The day of the murder of the Jewish intelligentsia (20th March 1943 – 175 people were shot) was remembered as was the heroism of a group of young ŻOB fighter – they were Moniek Flemenbaum (21yo), Olek Herszenberg (25yo), Janek Krauze (23yo), Heniek Rychter (19yo), Jerzyk Rozenblat (18yo) and Szlamek Szajn (27yo), who were also shot in March 1943, as well, the victims of the deportations to Treblinka and murders on ul. Kawia were remembered. For more, see: J. Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna...*, op. cit., p. 299.

⁶⁶ In June 1945, at the initiative of the Central Jewish Historical Commission (CŻKH), an attempt was made to create a branch of the CŻKH in Częstochowa. For more, see: “Głos Narodu” No. 103 dated 17th June 1945.

⁶⁷ Dawid Kahan (1903–1998) - rabbi. He came from a rabbinical family and received a traditional, religious upbringing. He received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Vienna. He settled in Lwów. He held the position of rabbi in Tykocin and at the synagogue on ul. Sykstuska in Lwów (1929-1939). He also headed the *Tanach* Academic Institute of the Lwów Jewish Community Council. He was saved from the Holocaust thanks to help from Andrzej Szeptycki, the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan. In 1944, he became a major in the People's Polish Army. After returning to Poland, in 1945, he was appointed Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army. He was also chairman of the Executive Committee of the Supreme Religious Council. He protested against manifestations of antisemitism and any resultant acts of violence. As a progressive rabbi, he was criticised for deviating from orthodoxy. After his rabbinical position was liquidated, he emigrated to Israel (1949). There, among other positions, he served as Chief Rabbi of the Air Force. In 1967-1975, he was Chief Rabbi of Argentina. In 1975, he returned to Israel and settled in Tel Aviv. For more, see: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawid_Kahane (accessed: 2nd June 2020).

⁶⁸ “Głos Narodu” No. 112 dated 28th June 1945.

Ceremonies,
in 1945,
dedicated to
the memory
of the victims
and
heroes of the
Częstochowa
ghetto,
with the
participation
of the Chief
Rabbi of the
Polish Army,
Lt. Col. Kahan.



Photographs:
L. Kuszniir

Representatives of virtually all Jewish organisations and parties, which operated in the city, participated in these Committee's activities, especially in those commemorating the murdered Jews. Of course, this does not mean that there was no constant rivalry amongst these groups. In pursuing their own goals, each of them conducted political and cultural activity for their own members and supporters. Zionist organisations set up temporary *kibbutzim*, where they trained young people prior to their emigration to Palestine.⁶⁹

The Jewish PPR (Polish Workers' Party) was active. The Bund had large premises on ul. Katedralna, where lectures and entertainment events were often organised.⁷⁰ On its premises it established the V. Medem Library and also a workers' restaurant.⁷¹ The Jewish Religious Organisation organised the spiritual life of the Częstochowa Jews. There was a rabbinate which performed weddings in an *"improvised synagogue", a functioning ritual bath, a kosher public kitchen which served free meals⁷² to poor and lonely Jews⁷³*. A religious school was also established.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.

⁷⁰ For more, see: *ibidem*.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

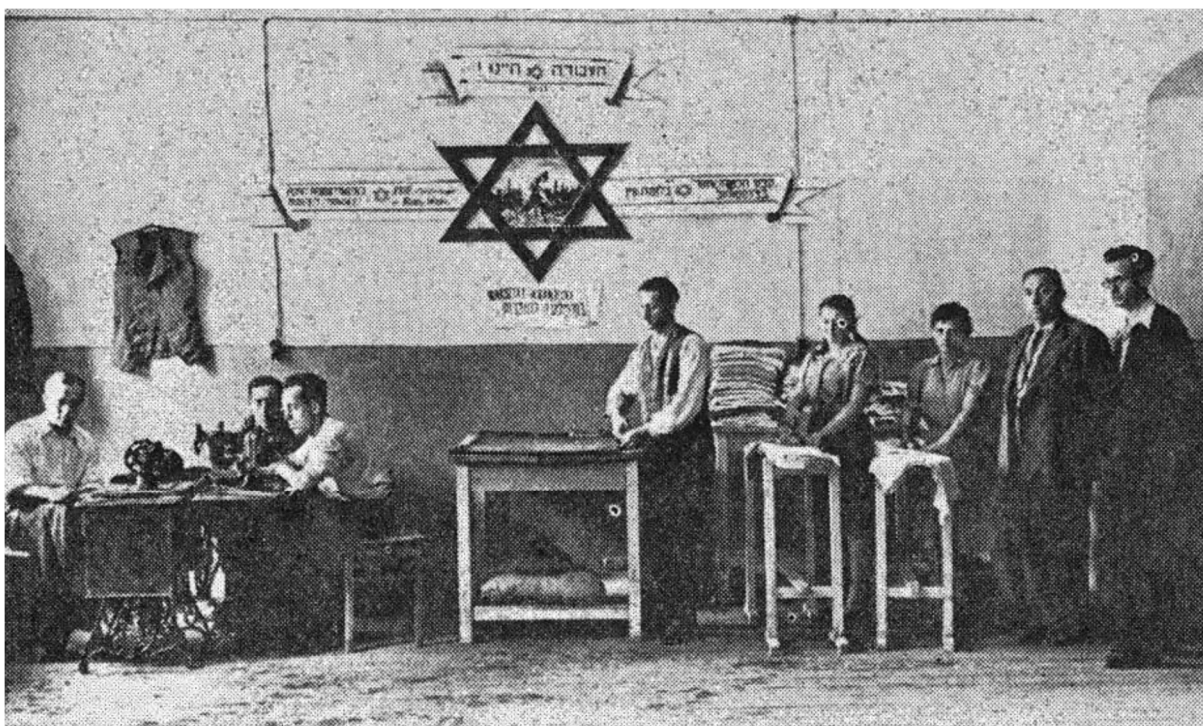
⁷² In essence, about 100 kosher meals were served.

⁷³ A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁷⁴ See D. Jarosz, *Częstochowa...*, op. cit., p. 36; for: State Archives in Katowice. Files of the Częstochowa Municipal Department of Information and Propaganda. Report of the activities of the Jewish Religious Association in Częstochowa, dated 28th January 1946, ref. 62, p. 59.



The photograph shows ceremony participants and the Napoleonic banner, which had been preserved by the Jews from the beginning of the 19th century and also during the War. Photo. L. Kuszniir



Members of the "Ichud" kibbutz in Częstochowa after the War, training in preparation for "Aliyah"



January 1946 – the exhumation of victims of the operation carried out in the “Small Ghetto” in January 1943

In September 1945, the Jewish Religious Association held a memorial service marking the third anniversary of the liquidation of the Częstochowa ghetto.⁷⁵ The most important task undertaken by the Congregation was arranging for the exhumation and burial of the Jews who were killed during the *akcja* in the “Small Ghetto”.⁷⁶

Ob. Brener Lili ur. dn. 4.11.1897r. Imię Jetta Data urodz. 4.11.1909

Zatrudniony w Pracowni Kuch. Zydowskiej od dn. 1.1.1946r.

zamieszkały w Przeł. Łańcuch ul. Żelazna 8/5

Stan cywilny żona

Jeżeli małżonka) prosić podać zakład pracy, w którym jest zatrudniony awant, czym się trudni

stwierdza, że pozostają na jego wyłącznym i całkowitym utrzymaniu, nie pracują u nikogo najemnie i że nie

niżej wyszczególnione dzieci nie są pobierane zasiłki rodzinne przez inną osobę.

(wyszczególnić odpowiednio: a) żonę, b) dzieci w wieku do lat 16 – żonę, awant, przysposobioną i niepełną, pozostałe i dzieci oler wojny

rodzinną, przysięgę na wyżywienie oraz wypłatę, c) ponad 16 lat jeżeli są młodszą do zarabkowania lub uczęszczają do szkół. Jeżeli żona lub dzieci zamieszkuje

oddzielnie, podać ich adres w uwadze. Jeżeli dzieci uczęszczają do szkoły, podać w uwadze nazwę zakładu nauki – ogół.

Nazwisko i imię	Pokrewieństwo	Data urodzenia	Miejsce zamieszkania od dnia	U w a g i
Brener Jetta	żona	4.11.1909	od 1.1.1946	
Brener Lilianna	córka	19.7.1941		
Brener Anetta	- -	24.4.1949		

Employee document: L. Brener's family insurance card

TSKŻ Częstochowa Archive

⁷⁵ “Głos Narodu” No. 178 dated 16th September 1945. It is, of course, about the liquidation of the “Big Ghetto” and the deportations to Treblinka.

⁷⁶ In January 1946, the bodies of 27 Jews, killed by the Nazis on 4th January 1943, were exhumed. During the selection on that day, there was an act of armed resistance. Mendel Fiszlweicz, an escapee from Treblinka and a member of a fighting group, his companion Icchak Fajner and a young woman (name unknown, but probably Pola Szczekowicz) attacked the German officers in charge of the selection. They died, as did the Jews selected as punishment. After the War, a monument was erected in honour of the victims of this act of violence.

Mentioned earlier, Jerzy Einhorn, gained his matriculation in Częstochowa and enrolled to study medicine in Łódź. But eventually, he left the country, helping many others.⁷⁸ Zygmunt Rozenblat also left Częstochowa. He was prevented from staying due to a lack of opportunities for further education. Even though he came from a secularised and Polonised family, under Polish conditions, it was impossible to make up for the gap caused by the occupation.⁷⁹

The situation was even worse for Jews who, before the War, had been educated in Jewish religious schools and had been brought up in traditional Jewish families. Their knowledge of the Polish language, literature and culture was too small to pass examinations which, at that time, were obligatory for admission into schools for adults.⁸⁰

Zionists, by definition, dreamed of leaving for Palestine.⁸¹ In their case, leaving Częstochowa, or Poland in general, was perfectly understandable. But, why did other Jews leave Poland, *en masse*, after the first wave of emigration, which was mainly for the purpose of searching for families? In June 1946, there were circa 2,000 Jews in Częstochowa, who wished to organise their lives anew in Poland. Most of them, however, left Częstochowa.

Undoubtedly, one of the main factors, leading to that decision, was the “Kielce pogrom”.

⁷⁸ For more, see: J. Einhorn, *Wybrany...*, op. cit.

⁷⁹ For more, see: C.K. Szymański, R. Stefaniak, *Zygmunt ...*, op. cit., pp. 80–81.

⁸⁰ For more, see: A. Edelist, *Wspomnienia...*, op. cit., p. 208.

⁸¹ Zionists from the left and the right both dreamed about this. In preparation to leave, they organised temporary *kibbutzim*, mainly for young people who wished to emigrate. In Częstochowa, they were set up by Poalei and Agudas Yisroel. They included *kibbutzim* named “Beis Yaakov” (“The House of Jacob”) and “Ohel Sara” (“Sarah’s Tent”). For more, see: L. Brener, *The Jewish Settlement...*, op. cit.