

Archival Materials

At a meeting of the Book Committee, held on 4th April 1965, the matter of the Society's archival materials was discussed. Although every single document, report, bulletin, letter and response bring the Society's activities to their expression, it is nevertheless impossible, even with the best will, to print all of them – for the materials alone would need to occupy several hundred pages and, in addition, some of them are practically identical in content.

The Book Committee has, therefore, selected a limited number of materials, which will be reproduced without any alteration to their contents.

The Book Committee



Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

To all *Częstochowers*, long-established and newly-arrived *landsleit* in Montreal.

1949 Appeal

Dear friends,

The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal, in its unique manner and within the scope of its possibilities, has, over the course of its existence, actively taken part in aiding the victims of Nazism materially and financially.

With the dissolution of the DP camps in Germany and Austria, as well as with the *en masse* streaming of *Częstochower* immigrants to Canada, Israel and other countries, the Society is confronted with new tasks.

The martyr's path, which each one of the newly-arrived has gone through, is surely known - first in the ghettos and afterwards in the concentration camps, which were accompanied by troubles and pain. All the *Częstochower landsleit* carry, in their hearts, the sorrow and grief, which will never heal, for annihilated parents, sisters, brothers, spouses and children. Each individual, among those who miraculously survived, constitutes a separate tragic page of the history of the destruction and struggle of the bygone, glorious Jewish Community of *Częstochowa*.

Each one of them is like a limb hacked off from the people's tree which represented Polish Jewry.

Thousands, living within the ghetto walls, dreamed of coming to the free land of Canada and becoming acquainted with their *Częstochower* relatives and friends. To our great regret, only a small number of survivors, among these dreamers, were able to realise their dream.

What do the living conditions of our newly-arrived *landsleit* look like? They turn to the Executive as to how to settle themselves, how to procure a dwelling, a roof over their heads and, most importantly, to obtain work.

At the same time, letters arrive from our *landsleit* in Israel with pleas for aid.

The Executive therefore turns to you with this call:

Assist the saved brothers and sisters! Help them settle down by affording them employment in your workshops, shops and factories. Help them receive work with your acquaintances, friends and relatives. Fulfil the moral obligation towards your *Częstochower landsleit*. Also aid the newly-arrived *landsleit* in Israel.

The Executive

Report

From the First Festive Evening Marking the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Liberation of Częstochowa from the Nazi Yoke

(Held on 28th January 1950 at the Superior Dining Room, 1447 Rue de Bleury Street)

At the appointed hour, eight in the evening, *landsleit* with their spouses, families, friends and acquaintances, numbering 108 individuals, began streaming in. Executive member Abraham Wallace chaired the evening.

The Chairman opened the evening with a brief address and greeted the attendees. The consciousness, that almost all those present were *Częstochower landsleit*, created a family atmosphere, which prevailed the entire evening. An orchestra played and the public danced and celebrated to the sounds of music. Despite the fact that the agonies of the tragic experiences during the Nazi epoch - the destruction and the annihilation of their closest family members - were still fresh deep in the hearts of the attendees, there was nevertheless a desire to rejoice to spite those who had wished to destroy all the Jews. With this celebration, those saved from death manifested the perpetuity of [the People of] Israel and [that] "we are here".

The long tables, covered with white tablecloths, were well-served with various dishes. The public warmed itself with drinks and had a very good time together singing songs.

A singer, who came especially, appeared in a programme of folksongs with which she reminded of the home of old and of the bygone lifestyle.

A watch, donated by *landsmann* Harry Berk, was raffled. The proceeds were allocated towards supporting *landsleit* in Israel with food parcels.

The entertainment evening came to a close at one o'clock in the morning in an uplifted mood, with wishes to meet more often at such celebrations.

**Sz. Waga,
Chairman**

A Copy of a Letter

(It is the Executive's custom to accompany every cheque, sent as aid to a *landsmann*, with a letter. There is, in the archive, an entire array of texts from letters that were sent on various occasions. The Book Committee has selected this letter, which is dated March 1952.)

Esteemed *Częstochower landsmann*,

The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal, wishing to make your difficult material situation somewhat easier, [hereby] conveys to you a modest gift of aid in the form of a cheque for twenty dollars.

Today, we have mail fifty such cheques to our *Częstochower landsleit* in Israel. Our Executive has received many more petitions from people who are ailing, elderly and in need. Regretfully, we are unable to fulfil all the requests. Our fundraising campaign among our sixty *Częstochower* families, who are mostly new arrivals in the country and work here hard enough to make a living, has not afforded us greater possibilities. It is, therefore, our wish that the cheques should reach those *landsleit* who are in the most, dire need of our aid.

Dear friend, if you feel you are in need of the posted cheque, accept it as a gift from your own [people]. But if you feel you do not need it, pass the cheque on to a different *Częstochower* family who is in need of it. By dispensing the aid correctly, we here and you there will have fulfilled a communal and responsibility-laden obligation.

We ask you, unconditionally, to reply to this letter as to how you resolved the matter.

Wishing you a happy Pesach,

The Executive

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

Activity Report

On Saturday evening, 29th November 1952, a general meeting was held. It was opened with an introductory word from the Chairman, who explained that the gathering bore the character of a friendly talk and comradely meeting:

“Those present in this hall have lived together half their lives in the same city and have been neighbours on the same street or in the same building. Each and every one of them has warm feelings towards one another, and this has brought about a heartfelt relationship between each other. These sentiments must persist, and it is to this purpose that today’s meeting was called - and such gatherings will also be held in the future.

We cannot complain about our financial situation in Canada. We live here freely. We enjoy the benefits of what this rich land possesses. We sit at tables finely laden with everything in abundance and we should, therefore, ask ourselves, ‘Have our brothers and sisters, the Czenstochower landsleit who are living in other countries, towards whom we possess the same sentiment, also have the possibility of enjoying the finest and best?’

It is in this direction that we shall lead our current talk, which bears [the character of] a comradely meeting and will be dedicated to our landsleit living in other countries - who are, incidentally, among those alongside whom we suffered the horrific torments under Hitler’s yoke.

Today, the [committee of] management will deliver an activity report regarding the last few months, and some of the numerous letters from our Czenstochower landsleit in Israel, Poland and other countries will be read out loud. In this manner, we shall have an accurate picture of their situation and also of our relief work for them.”

Then, the Secretary of the Society, Kuba Goldberg, explained that:

“After the War, a small group of long-established landsleit in Montreal formed the organisation, which distinguished itself with very important activities in the field of relief. We have taken over a fine legacy and we shall continue it, under the new conditions that have been created, with many landsleit in different countries, and particularly in Israel.

Our Society is not an insurance company¹. We have also not created any of the institutions that exist in other landsmannschaften. We have also not wished to

¹ [TN: Many landsmannschaft organisations afford their members various forms of insurance for a membership fee.]

compete with the large existing fraternal organisations here in Montreal, such as the [Jewish] National Workers Alliance and the Arbeiter-Ring [Workmen's Circle].

Today, we only have in mind the issue of relief activity - that which we have hitherto done, and finding ways and means to further continue the relief activity. We have, until now, sent aid in the form of parcels of food and clothing and scrips [viz. payment certificates] directly to landsleit in need. We have received dozens of letters expressing gratitude. We have made every effort that as many landsleit as possible should enjoy this aid.

(Kuba Goldberg read out a whole series of excerpts from the thank-you letters which had arrived.)

The excerpts from these letters give a clear picture of the importance of the relief activities.

In our Society, in general, we have created a healthy, family-like atmosphere. Our landsleit are interested in our work and show an appropriate interest in all the issues handled by us. Let us, with this same energy and devotion, continue our activities.

The Treasurer, Harry Klein, said:

"At today's gathering, you have had the opportunity to hear the Society's activity report, as well as a reflection on the assistance and interest on part of the landsleit. Upon Flw. Ch. Silver and myself have been laid the Society's financial issues. With great effort and exertion, we seek ways and means to be able to cover the relief obligations towards our landsleit in Israel and Poland.

The question, which each one should ask himself, therefore arises: "From where do we take money? We do not pay membership fees. We do not hold any special fundraising campaigns. So how is this possible? I have the answer before you pose the question. An Executive has been elected to take care [of matters] – and what I wish to tell you is that the Executive is indeed taking care.

We have printed raffle [ticket] booklets and sent to our landsleit in the sum of 250 dollars. Each Executive member received a list of several landsleit and visited them in their homes and, in this manner, the money was collected. We approached the old-established landsleit and some of them responded very warmly, namely Mr Nathan Gelber with a hundred dollars and Mr Harry Berk with a hundred dollars, and also various other smaller donations, which brought in the sum of five hundred and thirty-three dollars. With pride and joy, I wish to affirm that, for that money, we sent out sixty-two food parcels to our Cześćochower landsleit in Israel. I consider it my obligation, on behalf of the Executive, to express heartfelt thanks to all the landsleit who helped in giving and in collecting this money.

We have, at meetings, several times contemplated the question of implementing membership fees, but we did not wish to pass such a resolution without your agreement. You will, therefore, immediately have the opportunity of speaking your mind regarding this issue.

I close my treasury report with the hope that everyone will take part in our important work with more effort and enthusiasm than up until now."

Discussion

An entire array of *landsleit* then spoke. They praised the Executive's activities and it was unanimously resolved to implement a voluntary three-month membership fee.

The formal meeting was then transformed into the chat amongst friends as had been predicted, and pledges for various sums - three, five and more dollars per three months, each one according to his possibilities - were written at the [tables with the] modest yet heartily served refreshments.

With satisfaction, we must state that all the attendees honoured their pledges and some donated their cheques right away.

A watch and three books were also raffled. Let us also note here that Flw. Herszlikowicz, who won the book *Czenstochover Yidn*, auctioned it immediately and donated the sum of twelve dollars, that it fetched, to the Society's treasury.

The meeting came to a close in an uplifted mood, with a desire to meet more often at such gatherings.

The Executive

The Visit of Dr Wolf Gliksman from Philadelphia

In September 1952, our *landsmann* Dr Wolf Gliksman from Philadelphia visited Montreal. A meeting of the Executive was held in honour of the guest, and an entire array of issues were discussed. Among other things, a report of the activities was delivered, as well as plans for future activities. Dr Wolf Gliksman was highly instrumental with his suggestions and comments. Dr Wolf Gliksman conveyed his impressions and thoughts regarding the Society of Montreal in a letter, in which he wrote:

"I have long forgotten a time since I drew such spiritual gratification from a session on communal matters, as was the case at the meeting with you in Montreal at the home of Sz. Waga.

Your devotion, understanding and concern for our landsleit, throughout the globe, is simply infectious. Your response to the necessities of Częstochowers in need, as I have seen it in the large number of requests for aid that were fulfilled, is yet another proof of your tirelessness and watchful eye for human suffering.

Once again - without any phrases and beautiful words - taking in consideration the small number of members of your group, the quality of your activities is higher by orders of magnitude. Your work is, therefore, weightier compared with organisations that surpass you in quantity.

[All that] remains for me is to wish you that this spirit and ideal should persist as long as possible and should be a stimulus for future fruitful deeds."

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

To all *Częstochower landsleit*:

Dear friends,

The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft fulfils a sacred obligation in assisting the *landsleit* in Israel, who turn [to us] for aid. We must help these people, whom we know personally and alongside whom, not long ago, we suffered hunger and pain in the ghetto and in the HASAG camps.

The Society receives heartrending letters requesting food products for our *landsleit* and their children.

Who among us will refuse to support those in hunger in Israel, at a time when we live in contentment here in Canada?

We appeal to both the old-established and newly-arrived *landsleit* to raise the necessary financial means to support our *landsleit* in Israel and in Poland, who are suffering want. These are people whom we have known since childhood and they are in our memory to this day.

We have shipped food parcels to the *landsleit* for Pesach and we wish to do the same for Shavuot.

We trust that you will enable us to do so by sending us your cheques, for as much as you possibly can, thus fulfilling a moral obligation and a humanitarian duty.

Enclosed is also a raffle ticket booklet, which we ask you to sell amongst your friends and acquaintances, and we request that you promptly send the money collected to us.

With greetings of friendship,
The Executive

Sz. Waga, Chairman
Kuba Goldberg, Secretary

A Letter to Flw. Nathan Gelber

(There are in the archive a large number of copies of letters which were mailed to landsleit for their festive occasions, such as brises, bar-mitzvahs and weddings. The purpose of these letters is to bestow hearty blessings upon the celebrator of the event, and also to remind in a delicate manner regarding a donation to assist the Society's relief activities.)

Dear *landsmann* and friend Nathan Gelber,

The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal conveys to you its heartiest blessings and good wishes for your son's wedding.

Your son's wedding day is for him and for you, as his father, a day of happiness, future and joy. We wish you that all your desires and all that you personally wish for yourself should be fulfilled in contentment.

The Society of Montreal consists mainly of newcomers and, despite the fact that you are one of the long-settled citizens of Montreal, we are still bound by the same threads of our home of old, the city of Cześćochowa.

It is there that your parents, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances lived. It is there that you were born and it is there that you spent your childhood and youth. It is there that your closest ones missed you and impatiently awaited your letters - and you wrote to them with yearning, and also did not forget to aid them financially.

All of us come from the same town. We know you and you know us – those who built and continued the activities in the old home. With your assistance, we built Jewish institutions, and we distributed the aid of the funds sent by you and the long-established *landsleit*. We also know that, when an appeal calling for aid arrived from there, from the home of old, you here responded generously and soulfully - thanks to which beneficial institutions eased, to some extent, the difficult and bitter life of Jewish people in our hometown of Cześćochowa.

You remember those times when all this was done and created. It is all thanks to the natural sentiment and feeling with which you are endowed.

There is no doubt that, in moments of soul-searching, you are reminded of your hometown and your close ones - each one individually and all of them as a whole. You still remember the streets, the buildings, the houses of worship, educational establishments and institutions with which your youth was bound.

The Cześćochower *landsleit* do not forget one another, and we continue all the good deeds of our unforgettable ones and keep their traditions.

Dear friend and *Częstochower landsmann* Nathan Gelber, on behalf of the Society's Executive, on behalf of all the *Częstochower landsleit* in Montreal and in my own name, we wish you, the young couple and your entire family a hearty *mazel-tov*.

**Czenstochover Landsmanshaft
Of Montreal**

Szlojme Waga

A reply to this letter, dated 7th May 1952, arrived from Flw. Nathan Gelber, together with a cheque for a substantial sum. This letter was written in English, and translated into Yiddish it reads²:

Sz. Waga,
5352 Park Avenue,
Montreal, PQ [Province du Québec]

Dear Mr Waga,

My wife and I express our sincere thanks for your friendly letter with good wishes for my son Isaac's wedding. Your blessings and congratulations were accepted with recognition by the young couple and they express their gratitude to you for the fine wishes.

Sincerely,

Nathan Gelber

² [TN: Not having found the original English-language text, we have retranslated it from Yiddish back to English.]

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

Short Bulletin

by Szlojme Waga, Secretary, and Harry Klein, Treasurer

At the anniversary banquet and general meeting, that was held on 3rd April 1954 under the chairmanship of Dr Henryk Lazarowicz, expression was given to the fact that, in the past year, a thousand dollars were raised and 138 food parcels and scrips were shipped to *landsleit* in Israel.

This relief activity was made possible thanks to the functions held and, particularly, to the money shower held by the women, thanks to the three-month membership fees of the *landsleit* and, obviously, thanks to the dedicated work of the Executive members, who devoted much effort, energy and time to achieve this result.

The meeting expressed its trust in the Executive, which was re-elected, together with several additional members.

The Executive was constituted as follows:

President – Ch. Silver;
Chairman – Szlojme Waga;
Vice-Chairman – Kuba Goldberg;
Secretary – L. Jakubowicz;
Relief Activity Secretaries – Berl Ickowicz and Mrs Sala Ickowicz;
Functions – B. Fefer, K. Goldberg, L. Buchwalter and J. Zylberberg;
Treasurer/Accountant – E. Srebrnik;
Collectors – H. Dilewski, M. Lewkowicz, M. Frydlender, H. Klein, B. Orenstein, B. Fefer, L. Buchwalter, Ortman, B. Ickowicz and J. Zylberberg.

With greetings of friendship,

The Executive:

H. Silver, President
Sz. Waga, Chairman
L. Jakubowicz, Secretary

Fundraising

At the beginning, each *landsmann* signed a pledge committing to the payment of a monthly amount. In the first years following their arrival in Canada, the financial situation of the *landsleit* did not make prompt payment of this fee possible. The collection of this money was therefore wrought with difficulties. Executive members would travel about in the evenings and on free days collecting the money. At the time, only one *landsmann* owned a car. He put it at the disposal of the Executive, and people called it "the *Częstochower* car". This car would, in fact, drive around through the Montreal streets with members of the Executive, who were the collectors and visited the *landsleit* - and thus the membership fees were collected. The money never [sat] warming itself in the cashbox, as it was directly sent to those in need, accompanied by a letter with kind-hearted words.

The Executive would also send out letters to the *landsleit* with an account for the amount they owed according to their pledge. This is a copy of one [such] letter:

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

Most esteemed landsmann,

We hereby inform you that the relief activity is underway, because that is what the state of our landsleit, whose fate is much worse than our own, demands of us. They are in Israel and Poland. Their economic situation is a difficult one and it is our duty to remember them. Some of them are sick, others old and depleted.

Our individual contribution is comparatively small and, if we pay it regularly according to our pledges, we do not feel this expense.

According to your declaration, you committed to paying _____ dollars a month. You have paid until _____. Your still owe _____ dollars.

We are sure you will settle this debt, whereby making it possible to continue the relief activity.

*We remain heartily thankful,
The Executive*

Over time, the economic situation of our *landsleit* became slightly more stabilised. Due to the difficulties of collecting the membership fees, they were abolished altogether and functions were held on different occasions which, on the one hand, gave the possibility of meeting with the *landsleit*, which created a more intimate atmosphere and, on the other, in this manner it was easier to raise the appropriate funds.

Once a year, from Purim to Pesach, a direct campaign of collecting money straight from the *landsleit*, which is called “*mo’os chitin*” [wheat money], is carried out. Letters with appropriate content are sent out, and every *landsmann* sends in a cheque with a voluntary donation or is visited by members of the Executive.

The Pesach campaign brings in approximately a thousand dollars.

[This is a letter from the Executive regarding the *mo’os chitin* campaign:]

May 1957

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

It is with great satisfaction that we inform you that the mo’os chitin campaign to aid our landsleit in Israel has this year been conducted with great success - thanks to your donation.

Be proud that you have been among those who helped raise the money needed to ship over forty parcels to our Czenstochower landsleit in Israel, who turned to us for aid.

We may proudly say that we have fulfilled the precept “All those that are hungry, let them approach and partake”³.

Imagine the joy of a landsmann of ours in Israel upon receiving a parcel for Pesach from us. In more than forty homes, they have blessed us, for we have not forgotten them.

The Executive thanks you heartily for your contribution and wishes you much joy in your life, and that you may always be among the givers and be able to give twice as much when required.

With the heartiest regards,

The Executive

³ [TN: In Talmudic Aramaic in the original; words recited at the beginning of the Passover Seder. Our rendering of the phrase is from A. Alexander's English translation of the Haggadah, London, 1787.]

A Written Message for the Fifteenth *Yuhrzeit*

Sz. Waga
Monaco,

October 1957

On the fifteenth *yuhrzeit*, together with you, I mourn for our parents and our families.

From the hundreds of *churban* [Heb. destruction] books about cities and *shtetls* in Europe, which have been published until now, and those which are yet to be printed, the great history of destruction and annihilation is taking shape. Until this great historical work, which we await impatiently, has been completed, we shall turn to our thoughts for remembrance and to our eyes which witnessed the impoverishment, humiliation and enslavement.

From our ears, we now wish to hear an echo of the wailing of children, when they were violently torn away from their parents in the days of the so-called “children’s *akcje*” [Pol. operations]. The mournful tones of the heartrending cries of the despairing mothers [for their children, who were torn away from them without a trace⁴,] are ringing in our ears.

And what have we all to remember of our own suffering? Are we not the remnants, the sole survivors of our large families who, bloodied by rifle butts, were crammed *en masse* into the cattle wagons and deported to Treblinka?

Let us now have those unforgettable images before our eyes. Let those cries and wails now ring in our ears. We turn our thoughts to those after whom we have a *yuhrzeit* today. We wish to immerse ourselves in their physical and emotional agonies and pain at the time when they were gassed or tortured by other methods.

This is our obligation of remembrance - this is the meaning of “*yizkor*”.

Besides our senses of being able to hear and see, we also possess spiritual attributes. What did we feel deep in our hearts and what did our minds apprehend while the cruelties were being carried out upon our nearest?

Here is a wordless conversation between parents and children during the woeful and tragic *akcje* of extermination in Częstochowa:

It was a sunny September day in 1942, at about one o’clock in the afternoon. From under the bridge in the city’s *aleje*⁵, a locomotive slowly set forth, puffing heavily, sluggishly dragging the cattle wagons, one after another, in which there were no cattle, but human beings being

⁴ [TN: This line was mistakenly printed further down the page in the original.]

⁵ [TN: Pol. “avenues”; ref. to Częstochowa’s main thoroughfare, which is divided into Avenues I, II and III.]

transported to their slaughter. The long train proceeded in the direction of ul. Wały [Dwernickiego and] Krótka, headed for Treblinka. At the same time, on ul. Wilsona, parallel to the train, under the watch of gendarmes, the young men and women, who had been selected in the current *akcja* for further slavery, marched. They were being taken to the collection point at ul. Krótka. These were the sons and daughters of the parents, who were passing by in the sealed carriages. Eyes, larger than normal, flickered from the small, latticed wagon windows, casting glances in all directions. Hands stretched out, reaching for the open air. They were moving up and down, as if saying "Be well!", and the fists were clenched, as if in demand of something.

The sons and daughters, upon seeing the train, the eyes, the hands and the fists, stretched out their necks. They walked on the tips of their toes, wishing to be as tall as possible, stroking the limbs of their parents with their gazes. The young group hastened its pace in order not to fall behind the accelerating train. They were driven towards the eyes, whose thoughts they read, and to the hands and clenched fists and what they were demanding.

This tragic dual chase of daughters and sons after the seven thousand fathers, mothers and children in the sixty-five carriages making their way to Treblinka on the steel rails hammered ever more strongly, to sever, all the faster, the strong thread between parents and children.

This was a chase with a meaning, with a significance.

The outstretched hands and the clenched fists spoke, screamed - they commanded. The sons and daughters took the mute words into their hearts and souls.

These mute words [were] with agony and sorrow, with suffering and with chagrin - but also with a behest for revenge as a directive for the future.

In our minds, the gruesome events appear which, fifteen years ago, devoured our nearest, our families and friends, after whom, today, we say a collective *Kaddish*.

Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal

June 1960

Esteemed *landsmann*,

As you are aware, thanks to your understanding in aiding our needy *landsleit*, the Executive has carried through the Pesach fundraiser successfully.

More than forty cheques, totalling 750 (seven hundred and fifty) dollars, were sent to Israel and Poland. With that, our funds have been depleted. However, we receive further appeals to send aid. In order to make the continuation of our work possible, the Executive has decided to hold a raffle campaign.

Enclosed is a booklet with 20 (twenty) raffle tickets and we request you to send in the money for it.

Assist us for the success of this raffle campaign.

With the Society's greetings,

The Executive

Sources of Material

1.) Archival documents:

- a.) Minutes books;
- b.) Letters received;
- c.) Copies of letters sent;
- d.) Newspaper clippings;
- e.) Mimeographed reports that were sent out to the members on various occasions.

2.) Published materials:

Dr Benjamin Orenstein

- a.) *The Activity of the Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal*, published in the book *Czenstochov*, New York 1958, pp.243-246;
- b.) *The Anniversary of Two Books and the Departure of Szlojme Waga*, publication of the Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal, 1958, 32 pages.

[Wolf Glikzman]

- a.) *Czenstochover and Vicinity Aid Society of Montreal, Canada*, published in the book *Czenstochover Yidn*, New York, 1947, pp.353-354.

