

Dawid Koniecpoler



Since 8th January 1949, *Częstochower landsmann* Dawid Koniecpoler, who is one of the communal activists who Jewish Częstochowa produced, has been living in Holon, Israel.

Dawid Koniecpoler, the son of Szlojme and Chana-Cypora [*née* Pytel], was born in Częstochowa on 27th February 1897. When he was two years old, his parents moved to Radomsko, where he spent the years of his childhood and youth.

This was during the Tsarist occupation, when any communal or political activities were prohibited. The persecutions by the Tsarist regime were manifested in arrests [and] deportations [to] Siberia and *katorga* [Rus., penal servitude]. Despite all this, the working masses had an incredible drive to organise, unite and fight for social justice,

Szlojme, Dawid Koniecpoler's father, was a carpenter and he stood naturally close to those circles which were leading the spiritual and physical struggle for their economic existence and national freedom. It was in this atmosphere that Dawid Koniecpoler was brought up.

Dawid received his education within the framework of the possibilities - at first in *cheder*, obviously, and then in the general [viz. secular] school. His main education was the environment, the home and the general atmosphere. In the earliest years of his youth, he was swept along with the slogans of the clandestine movement and became dominated by the Socialist-Zionist ideas. From very early, he began work and, as he stood in the carpentry workshop, he sang "the new songs and new tunes", which gave his life a new content and a new ideology. The carpentry workshop, the surroundings, the clandestine organisation, the new songs and new tunes matured Dawid Koniecpoler both spiritually and communally. With great interest, he read that had a bearing on Jewish life, wrangle and ideology of the movement. This enriched his knowledge and made him mature into the future outstanding communal activist in Częstochowa.

Dawid Koniecpoler returned to Częstochowa in September 1922 and opened a carpenter's workshop and, on 2nd January 1923, he married. As a carpentry craftsman, he immediately became active in the crafts movement and was elected to the board of the Craftsmen's Union in Częstochowa. He was also chosen as representative of the craftsmen in Częstochowa's Jewish *Kehilla* [Heb., Community Council]. Concurrently, he was active in the *Poalei Zion* organisation and performed important functions for the Jewish *Kehilla*, such as serving as Chairman of the Refugees Committee to aid the refugees from Zbąszyń, who had been expelled from Germany when Hitler, may his name be obliterated, came to power.

He published an entire array of articles in the Częstochowa press regarding economic, social, cultural and political issues, which aroused great interest and, particularly, among the craftsmen. He was also very active in the Craftsmen's *Ha'Chalutz* movement, which strove to obtain certificates for craftsmen to emigrate to the Land of Israel. An entire array of craftsmen and their families actually managed to emigrate to [the Land of] Israel through this organisation and, as specialists in their trades, they built very respectable industrial enterprises there.

The outbreak of the Second World War disrupted everything that had to do with the Jewish life. Dawid Koniecpoler ran a carpentry workshop in the Craftsmen's House¹ at Aleja 14, which was very frequently a meeting place for the representatives of the Jewish resistance movement. It is a fact that in 1943, Motek Zylberberg, the future commander of the resistance movement in the Small Ghetto, gave Dawid Koniecpoler four revolvers to hide in his workshop. A whole series of extremely clandestine meetings took place at this very same workshop – and at one such meeting, in February 1943, Comrade "Aniek" was present. "Aniek's" identity is very well-known – namely Mordche Anielewicz, future commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

On 9th March 1943, the Craftsmen's House was liquidated and all the craftsmen, who had workshops there, were transferred into the "Small Ghetto". Dawid Koniecpoler worked as a professional workman in the ghetto workshops, which consisted of a carpentry and a metalworking workshop. The Jewish Combat Organisation [ŻOB] decided to manufacture hand-grenades within the "Small Ghetto" itself. In order to make this possible, the machines needed to run on electrical power. Dawid Koniecpoler did this², and the members of the Combat Organisation's technical group produced grenades in the workshops of the "Small Ghetto" throughout entire nights.

Following the revolt and liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", Dawid Koniecpoler was barracked at ul. Garibaldiego and, later, at HASAG-Pelcery, from where he was liberated on 17th January 1945, when the Nazi powers suffered a devastating defeat and fled Częstochowa.

Dawid Koniecpoler is the only member of the pre-war Jewish *Kehilla* who was miraculously saved from the murderous Nazi hands. His wife was also miraculously saved.

Immediately following the collapse of the Nazi regime, although physically ailing and ruined, he actively participated in all the work connected with the rescue of Holocaust survivors. He was elected, immediately, to the religious Jewish *Kehilla*, whose purpose was to continue bygone glorious traditions. For a long time, Dawid Koniecpoler was ill and, as soon as he regained his health, he and his wife emigrated to Israel, which had for many years been his goal, ideal and aspiration in life.

¹ [TN: The Craftsmen's House was established by the German authorities simultaneously with the "Big Ghetto" in order to provide themselves with the unpaid expert labour of the best Jewish craftsmen (see the chapter "Life Goes On" in Sz. Waga's book "Churban Czenstochow").]

² [TN: Meaning that Koniecpoler enabled them to connect their hidden factory into the electricity grid. (From his biography in "Częstochowa Jews – a Biographical Dictionary").]

Dawid Koniecpoler published an entire series of essays on the Holocaust era, and they are listed in Dr Filip Friedman's bibliography in the book *Czenstochov*. He is also represented with a unique essay in the book *Czenstochover Yidn*, titled *The Last 24 Hours in HASAG*, and in this book, entitled *My Mother's Last Minutes*, with an extremely touching memoir about his mother Chana-Cypora RIP,.

Dawid Koniecpoler has contributed a great deal to the Jewish life and struggle of Częstochowa Jewry.
