

Relief Campaigns

The relief campaigns are conducted through sending monetary certificates, foodstuffs, clothes and medicines to Israel and Poland.

The fact of the matter is that the number of *Częstochower landsleit* in Poland decreases every year - above all, because Jewish life there becomes more extinguished as each year passes - so the majority of the aid is sent to Israel.

Over the course of its existence, the Society has sent out a hundred scripts [sic certificates?] or parcels a year. So, it has become necessary to contemplate the manner in which the aid is to be sent - whether it should be individual or constructive. These discussions take place in all the *Częstochowa* aid societies and *Landsmannschaften* throughout the entire American continent.

As a result, the Society agreed to send out a questionnaire regarding this issue, for the *landsleit* to voice their opinion on the matter.

Questionnaire

In March 1956, questionnaire sheets were sent to all the *landsleit* in Israel who were benefiting from the Society's material aid, as well as to the Organisation of *Częstochowa* Jews in Tel-Aviv. This questionnaire contained the eight following questions:

- 1) How many *Częstochower landsleit* live in your town?
- 2) What is the number of *landsleit* in need of aid?
- 3) What form of aid do the *landsleit* require - cash, clothing, food or medicines?
- 4) Should the aid be sent individually to those who apply to us directly, or to the *Częstochower* institutions, for them to distribute as they see fit?
- 5) In your opinion, instead of sending aid to *landsleit*, would it be better for this money invested in building institutions in Israel, e.g., medical centres, kindergartens or schools?
- 6) If you are in need of a loan, are you able to receive it from the Loans Fund?
- 7) In your opinion, should a Central Body of all the *Częstochower* associations and *Landsmannschaften* in the United States and Canada be formed, in order to generate larger sums for the Loans Fund?

8) Do you support a project to erect a monument in Israel commemorating the Częstochowa martyrs?

An entire array of responses arrived to this questionnaire, expressing [the views] that all these points were [actually] correct

- individual aid needed to be sent to the applicants petitioning the Society of Montreal;
- financial means needed to be sent to the Organisation of Częstochowa Jews, to enable it to conduct broad activity to benefit the *landsleit*;
- the Loans Fund needed to be enlarged, so that *landsleit* should be able to receive loans for constructive purposes;
- a monument needed to be erected, institutions to be built

and so on.

Meanwhile, masses of letters of different types - both individual and communal - were also streaming in.

Below, we present just a few brief quotations:

A *landsmann*, who received a package of clothing for his children, writes:

"Haifa, 10th June 1957

Eminent Częstochower landsleit, goodhearted brothers and sisters:

May you be blessed with all that is good. Upon receipt of your parcel, a ray of happiness appeared. You cannot imagine the joy of my children and my wife. I may tell you that I never thought my children would be dressed so well when everything is so expensive. Once again, I thank you for the package - and know that you have done a great mitzvah [Heb., good deed]. Keep well, together with your families. With great respect for you..."

An excerpt of a letter from a *landsmann* who received a cheque:

"10th June 1957

Dear Częstochower landsleit,

I have received your letter with the cheque, for which my family and I thank you very heartily, [as well as] for your devotion to us, Częstochower landsleit who are living in Israel. Dear friends, we know very well that a sack with holes can never be filled, but this gift has a very great significance for us."

In a letter from a *landsmann*, dated Tel-Aviv, 7th April 1957, in which he gives thanks for the cheque sent to him, he makes the following remarks:

"Dear friends, Częstochower landsleit,

I was very moved upon receiving your letter, especially when I saw the picture of the Częstochowa Synagogue at the top of the stationary. You are worthy of great acknowledgement for this beautiful idea, which serves as a symbol of the bygone life in our common town of birth. It is perhaps no coincidence that you - the Canadian landsleit - were the ones to hit upon the idea. This is in absolute keeping with your activity, which time has not forgotten. I thank you heartily for the cheque you sent. I wish all the Częstochower landsleit in Canada a happy Pesach."

Besides letters of this type, the Society also receives letters of a communal character. A *Częstochower landsmann*, a paediatrician in Israel, protests sharply against the system of support. He writes:

"The whole 'parcel system' is already not for us to eat, but to gorge ourselves... We cannot be eternal 'schnorrers' [Yid., scroungers], beggars and the like. Were our landsleit overseas to cease sending parcels, this would be a salvation for the communal morale."

Of a very special character are the letters from *landsmann* Dawid Koniecpoler from Holon, Israel. He does not write about the aid (Heaven forbid) - he neither desires it nor needs it. He writes that he has made a list of over one hundred bygone communal activists of the severed city of Częstochowa. Obviously, his letter aroused great interest and, following an exchange of letters, he writes, as follows, in a letter dated Holon, 18th May 1957:

"I have received your important letter dated 14th April, for which I thank you heartily. I am particularly pleased that, as you write, my letter was read aloud at a plenary session of the Executive. Memories surge up of decades of strenuous political and communal work and we, once more, relive our dark tragedy. Everything has been torn out almost with the root. I am deeply convinced that it is very favourable that, here and there, [historical facts] are recorded and printed, which will enable the future historian of our epoch to compile the most tragic chapter of our history."

These excerpts from a few letters characterise the viewpoints and interests of the *landsleit* in Israel - namely, yes to individual aid, which helps them get through a difficult time, but no to individual aid which damages the morale of the *landsleit*.

Dawid Koniecpoler's viewpoint is that it would be better to focus on immortalising the history of Częstochowa Jewry. The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal is of the opinion that *Częstochower Landsmannschaften* and aid societies in the American continent must coordinate their activities for constructive aid and, concurrently, in exceptional cases, conduct an activity of individual aid. The Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal agrees completely with Dawid Koniecpoler's opinion, as one of the tasks and activities.