

Lipman Rajcher

## The *Shabbes* Kitchen (*Shabbes-Kych*) in the “Big Ghetto”

The stream of refugees which came to the “Big Ghetto” in Częstochowa from different parts of Poland brought with it a significant number of religious Jews, who had become poor overnight. They arrived without clothing or anything else, and they lived in the different houses of prayer, which had been appropriated for this purpose, sometimes with about a hundred people in one room and almost all needing aid.

In view of this situation, a public committee was organised, made up of Berl Gwircman, Dr Dawid Sz. Erlich, Reb Icze Grajcer, Reb Naftuli Urbach, Reb Leizer Rozenbaum - all these have already passed away - and Reb Noach Edelist, Reb Hendel Pradelski and myself, which set itself the goal to collect funds in order to procure food for the refugees.

The *Shabbes* Kitchen, in which *Shabbes* meals were prepared for hundreds of people, was considered an intrinsic enterprise in the efforts to extend aid to the needy. At set tables, on the *Chevra Kadisha's* premises at ul. Joselewicza 5, the [more] important men and women dined. Although they felt uncomfortable eating together, they had no option but to accept their fate. Meals were delivered to the homes of those ailing. People sang *zmires* [traditional *Shabbes* songs] during the meals and one could plainly see that this was the only radiant hour in their lives. For many, this was their only warm meal in the course of the entire week. For a while, there was also a daily soup kitchen at the *Zhuriker Rebbe's* house on ul. Nadrzeczna Street, to the Main Synagogue.

Young religious people were engaged in the practical labour of the kitchen's operation. These included Jakób Lewkowicz, Herszel Zander, Jakób Rechtman, the Szyldhaus brothers, Lipman Frajermauer, Szlojme Józef Erlich (all of blessed memory), and Józef Faktor.