

The Book Committee

Częstochowa Jews Fight for Their Rights

As is known, Częstochowa was once part of the great, Russian empire.

Upon the partition of Poland, Russia “inherited” a huge amount of territory (actually 10 governorates!), which it crowned with the impressing name “*Privislinsky Krai*”, meaning “the lands by the *Weichsel* [Wisła; Vistula river]” and, thereto, it enforced its laws and sent its governors – true-trying “*Phonyas*” [derogative term for “Russian” in Yiddish slang], who controlled everything there.

The “*Polaks*” [Poles] scratched with an itch and were compelled to abide by all Russian decrees.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, when a revolution broke out in Russia, the *Polaks* conducted strikes and demonstrations. Their socialist workers’ parties, especially, also stood up to the battle for freedom from the Tsarist yoke and Częstochowa, too, took part in the revolutionary movement.

The Russian Tsar, Nikolai II, then issued his “manifesto”, in which he announced that he gave “freedom” to the people to elect a folks’-representative [congress] to decide the fate of the empire and work out its constitution.

But fearing the “horrendous” name “parliament”, he “crowned” the said folks’-representative with the specific Russian name “*Gosudarstvennaya дума*” (Yiddish: - *Meluche-dume*) [State Duma].

But the Russian government saw to it that such elections were carried out by which the masses had almost no foothold in the Duma.

The elections were not “direct”, but for each “class” of the population, separate “*couriers*” were appointed and these “*couriers*” were so “ingeniously” divided up, that just a few hundred noblemen or other “distinguished individuals” voted in the same amount of “*vyborshchikes*” [from Ru. *Выборщик*; elector] as a 100,000 voters from the city (thus were named the “delegates” who were elected in the towns and villages, to later vote for the 3-4 candidates from each *gubernia* [governorate; province]).

The reasoning was simple - the majority of the voters, Jews and workers, were in the city. Thus, they should have the minimum electoral results possible...

Our Częstochowa (to whose electoral circle also belonged all the towns and villages in the entire *powiat*) had, in total, just 8 “*vyborshchikes*”!

The Polish “extremists”, who were then already great antisemites, wanted to use the undemocratic elections to seize all mandates and they presented their candidates’ lists for “*vyborshchikes*” everywhere, without including a single Jewish candidate - even “for luck”. They did not even grant this honour to “*Polaks*” who did not dance to their tune of zoological antisemitism...

Polish progressive elements, therefore, decided to present a joint list [together] with the Częstochowa Jews and thus, for the elections to the first Russian Duma, Jews and progressive “Polaks” figured together.

The candidates were four Jews and four “Polaks”:

- 1.) Dr. Franciszek Bellon;
- 2.) *adwokat* [lawyer] Jan Glikson;
- 3.) Jan Grosman;
- 4.) Dr. Edward Kon;
- 5.) Dr. Józef Martuszewski;
- 6.) Henryk Markusfeld;
- 7.) Dr. Stanisław Nowak
- 8.) Engineer Kazimierz Reklewski.

We’ve been able to find two documents from that time:

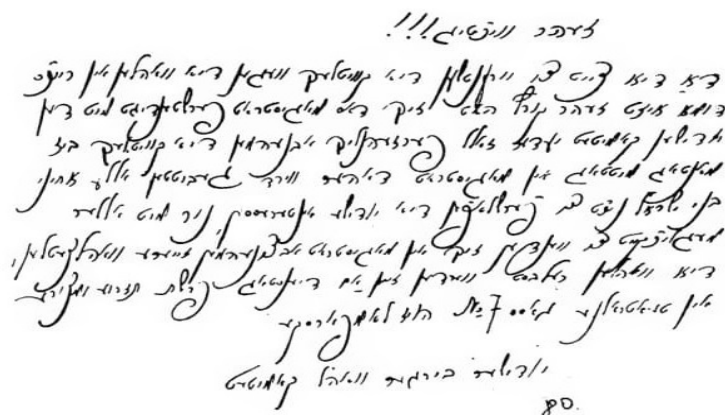
- 1.) A summons to the Jews of Częstochowa *powiat*, dated April 17th 1906, the end of Pesach, 5666, signed: “*Jewish Burghers’ Electoral-Committee in Częstochowa*”; and
- 2.) an announcement from the same electoral committee which is marked as “*very important!!!*”. From these, we learn, among other things, “*that the elections are to be held this Tuesday, [weekly section of] Tazria-Metzora at ulica Teatralna 7, Lamparske house*”.

We show here photographs of a long “*oyfruf*” [appeal] which was written manually, in a wonderful calligraphic script, to characterise how our elders and grandfathers “*held elections 60 years ago*”.

As to the matter itself, it was a struggle was for nothing. The extremists, everywhere, had a victory and won all the mandates.

It is interesting to mention that, while the Duma handled the issue of changing the electoral ordinations, their leader, the Kielce lawyer Jaroński (who had, mainly, made a living from his Jewish clients), demanded limiting the burghers’ rights of the Jewish voters...!

Reminder about time and place of the elections:



Photographs of the original proclamation regarding the elections to the first Russian "Duma"

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הנהגתו המהפכנית אשר הנהיגה את רוסיה

- 1) דוקטור פראנסיס ג'וליון
- 2) אדוואט ג'אן גליקסון
- 3) ג'אן גרוסמאן
- 4) דוקטור אדוארד קוהן
- 5) דוקטור יוזף מארקוסיני
- 6) הנרייט מארקוספלד
- 7) דוקטור האמטור נורוואי
- 8) אינג'יניר קארמייטרי רוסלובסקי

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