

Aleksander Haftka

One of the most interesting personalities which Częstochowa produced in the last generation of its existence was Aleksander Haftka, who ended his rich social and literary life in New York, where he died in 1964, at the age of 71.

The son of a strictly orthodox family, he began his education in Jewish *cheders*. Already in his early youth, he tore himself away from this way of life, drew near our city's assimilationist circles, studied with them and was swept up by the current of Polish patriotism. He even enlisted as a volunteer with Piłsudski's Legion, with which he fought for the liberation of Poland and the establishment of an independent Polish State.

When he moved to Warsaw, following the proclamation of the independent Polish State, he was engaged as assistant to Mr Adelberg, the advisor on Jewish affairs for the Interior Ministry. He gradually began coming closer to the Jewish, nationalist leaders although, for obvious reason, he did not show this openly. But more than once, through his secret but very authoritative information, he helped to annul various decrees in time.

Before the last World War, a work by an anonymous author was published, under the name "*Theodor Lessing, Stefan Zweig and The Mysterious One*". In this work, the anonymous author predicted the great danger threatening the European Jewry and warned that this danger should be fought before it was too late.

No one knew that the writer of this book was our *landsmann* Aleksander Haftka.

Just the same as other assimilated intellectuals, he too experienced the bitter disappointment, seeing how the beautiful dreams about the times in which, in the modern world, humanism would prevail and the Jews too would enjoy true equal rights as citizens and be admitted into the grand hall of Polish and worldwide culture, were dashed.

Aleksander Haftka was also a significant academic. But, being very modest, only very few people knew he was a researcher and a talented writer, above all, in the field of Jewish History.

Living his last years in tempestuous America, he wrote and published two large and beautifully illustrated volumes in Polish, entitled "*The Jews in Newly-Liberated Poland*", which were edited by Dr J. Szyffer and Dr A. Tartakower.

Aleksander Haftka gathered all the material for this monumental work all by himself. He also discovered a vast collection of reproductions of portraits of the most famous personalities in Polish Jewry, as well as pictures of old synagogues and cemeteries, which are of historical importance for the story of Jewish life in Poland (until it was destroyed).