

T.K.

## Director Henryk Markusfeld



The deceased was a shining figure, one which only appears on the Jewish horizon once in many generations. One of the greatest magnates of his generation, he was still a simple, humble Jew, such as was difficult to find in his times. He was a man with an outstanding sense of hearing - the quietest groan of a suffering person, coming from the depths, - *"a still small voice"* [1 Kings, 19:12] - immediately reached his ear. It mattered nothing to him from whom the groan came, whether from a Jew or a Christian, old or young - he immediately opened his purse. And, with the feelings of a man who senses a Godly mission, he generously administered his assistance.

He always endeavoured to carry out his "Godly mission" in such a manner that the one in need should not perceive it, should not be shamed. He also always accompanied his financial aid with moral support. He encouraged the beneficiary and strengthened his faith in a better future which was to come as quickly as possible for the sufferer. And it was not only individuals that he treated in this manner.

He was first and foremost among the philanthropists for all the communal institutions. He always contributed handsomely and became an example for other donors. If Częstochowa possessed fine and essential institutions, this was - mainly - due to the fact that it had the great privilege of having, among its townspeople - we may say that as its most prominent resident - Henryk Markusfeld, the son of Adolf and Ernestina z''.

Henryk Markusfeld could, by the way, also take pride in his lineage.

Professor Majer Bałaban, in his historical essay regarding the participation of Jews in the Polish uprising of 1863 (in his article, published in *"Nasz Przegląd"* ["Our Review"], dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 1937), that in the delegation which travelled to Vienna in 1861 to conduct negotiations with the Austrian minister [Anton von] Schmerling concerning Polish affairs, there were three representatives of the "Jewish city" (thus was Kraków referred to at the time) among whom was Henryk Markusfeld - the magnate's great-grandfather - who was already then a great industrialist and a renowned public activist. At the head of the Jewish delegation stood Abram Gumplowicz, the father of Prof. Ludwig G. and grandfather of Prof. Władysław G. and of the prematurely deceased historian, Dr Maksymilian G., as well as of Dr Józef Ettinger (for whom the Austrian authorities in Vienna made difficulties in securing a scientific position at the Jagiellońian University in Kraków, at which he was only appointed as assistant professor in 1867).

The Jewish delegates - just as the Polish ones - appeared before the Minister in their Polish attire, to publicly display their Polish patriotism. Emperor Franz Joseph was unable to pardon them this "sin", especially the Jewish delegates.

Henryk Markusfeld was born in 1852, and, almost 69 years later on a Friday in October 1921, when the sun rose and people found out that Henryk Markusfeld had suddenly died, the Częstochowa sky was truly darkened.

All Częstochowa Jews, from all classes, were stunned by the tearful news of his sudden death - and not only the Jews - even the entire Christian population felt the great loss for the whole city, for the deceased had helped everyone, regardless of religion or political tendencies.

On Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1921, a unified, funerary committee of all the Jewish communal institutions published a flier in Yiddish and Polish expressing the deep sorrow of the entire Jewish population for the sudden demise of this great philanthropist, public figure and friend of the people.

We reprint, below, verbatim, the two articles in Yiddish:

### **In Memory of Henryk Markusfeld z"l**

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October, at dawn, with lightning speed, the teary news spread of the sudden death of Henryk Markusfeld z"l, who was beloved by our entire population without exception, in all its strata. [This news] touched all hearts exceptionally and almost broke them with sorrow.

He was a humanitarian in the full sense of the word - a person to whom none in our society, not even the most complicated of currents and tendencies in our lives, were foreign.

Endowed with an unheard-of energy and a clear intellect, as well as true altruism, he brought creative influence to all fields of life, regardless of status and views, religion and nationality, which served only the cause of mankind.

Very seldom does destiny grant society such a person; we may state with complete certainty that he, alone, did much more than any individual before him for our city and its cultural-social development and, by himself, achieved more than an entire generation before him.

But he was not only the spirit of our city's development. He not only supported the institutions he created, he not only served all with his counsel and deeds, but with his unlimited unselfishness was able to pull the entire population with him on the quest to create institutions of an appropriate level, which is impossible for an individual person to achieve.

He held all the population's spiritual as well as physical needs dear. He saw to the creation and development of schools for general education, such as the Jewish gymnasia, and musical societies for Jewish youth and, at the same time, also the crafts - and horticultural - schools for professional training.

Acknowledging the youth's physical development as a non-negotiable condition for human health, he founded a Jewish sports and gymnastics union and inspired the youth to establish a Jewish scouting organisation.

There is no institution in our city, be it communal, financial or charitable, of which he was not the leading force and whose activities he did not enliven with his thoughts and unheard-of energy.

He granted exemplary support to the poor and the neglected ones and no one left him without receiving aid.

By his direct charitable deeds and by encouraging the hearts of the desperate and fallen, he gained the extraordinary respect and popularity for which he will forever be remembered among our residents.

Henryk Markusfeld's cultural-social activity was on an unprecedented scale. He was *Prezes* of the Jewish *Kehilla*.; past long-standing *Prezes* and last honorary *Prezes* of the Jewish "*Dobroczynność*" [see earlier article]; founder of the Jewish Hospital; founder and administration-*Prezes* of the Crafts School and *cheder*; founder and *Prezes* of the Horticultural Farm; founder and Board of Management member of the Jewish high school; honorary member and treasurer of the fire-fighters; honorary *Prezes* of the Jewish Gymnastics-Sporting Association; founder and patron of the "*Shomrim*" ["Guards"] scouting organisation; co-founder and director of the Częstochowa "Credit Association"; co-founder and council member of the opposing Częstochowa credit association; founder and honorary *Prezes* of the Jewish Merchants and Manufacturers Union; founder and honorary *Prezes* of the New Synagogue; founder of the New *Mikvah*; past long-standing *Prezes* and last honorary *Prezes* of "*Linas Ha'Tzedek*" [see earlier article]; honorary *Prezes* of the Jewish Retailers' Union; honorary *Prezes* of the Jewish Craftsmen's Club; honorary member of the Trade and Industry Institute's society; honorary member of the "*Machzikei Hadas*" *cheder*; honorary *Prezes* of the Częstochowa Zionist Organisation; honorary *Prezes* of "*Hachnoses Orchim*" [see earlier article]; honorary *Prezes* of the women's association "*Ezrah*" [see earlier article]; honorary *Prezes* and patron of the "*Herzliya*" [see earlier article] youth organisation and honorary *Prezes* of the central Jewish Gymnastics-Sporting Federation in Poland.

The loss of this man is an inconceivable misfortune for our entire society.

May his memory be honoured! May his soul be entwined in the thread of life.

### **He was a unique character**

Poor and rich, young and old, manufacturer and worker, man and woman, Jew and Christian - all were acquainted with him and knew about him, because he, too, was acquainted with everyone and knew about them.

He did not come to them with empty hands. If Henryk Markusfeld discovered that preparations were being made to establish a new association in our city, or to build a new institution, he came at once and, with his large donation, lay the cornerstone for the institution and also saw to its further maintenance.

And he gave regardless of what sort of institution it was and to which faction it belonged.

Henryk Markusfeld gave to all. He donated to institutions which aided the healthy and also to those who succoured the sick. He stood at the head of two rival credit associations. He founded and helped build the Jewish Hospital. He gave to the Merchants and Manufacturers Unions and, at the same time, did not refrain from supporting the workers' institutions. On a large scale, he contributed to the establishment of the New Synagogue. He made every possible effort to build the large *mikvah* and, simultaneously, donated all sorts of equipment to the fire-fighters, as well as much money to the Christian "Lutania" [?].

For years, numerous orphans ate at Henryk Markusfeld's table. He took an interest in many respectable poor families. He would periodically send donations to the women's associations and gave a place under his roof to the Jewish scouts. As *Prezes* of the *Kehilla* for many years, he was involved in all municipal Jewish affairs. He co-founded the Jewish high school and held up its pillars. He saw to the development of the Jewish Sporting Union. He helped maintain the musical and literary societies, strengthened the coffers of the horticultural farm, of the Crafts School, and on, and on, and on - to such an extent, that there is practically no institution or institute that did not feel Markusfeld's generous hand.

Henryk Markusfeld was at the front, everywhere and always. Almost all the associations and institutions elected him as honorary *Prezes* or administration-*Prezes* and he was, therefore, crowned with the title "*Prezes Prezesów*" ["President of Presidents"].

With that, Henryk Markusfeld was unsophisticated and humble. He was not proud. He did not look down at anyone from above, but spoke with everyone affectionately and simply, as with an equal.

Hence, it is no wonder that Henryk Markusfeld's name is so beloved, not only in Częstochowa, but also in other cities of Poland, and that they therefore envy Częstochowa with our Markusfeld.

Alas, this great public activist and philanthropist has parted from us forever and has left us, the entire Częstochowa Jewish populace, as orphans.

But although Henryk Markusfeld, the man, for us has died, Henryk Markusfeld, the benefactor and humanitarian, the creator and builder of various institutions and institutes, shall forever live among us!

May his memory be honoured!



All the Jewish institutions published heartfelt condolences in Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish in the flyer, and expressed their sorrow for his death and sympathy for his family.

It should be mentioned that, in the funeral announcements from the rabbi and his rabbinical court, the management of the *Kehilla* and also from "*Machzikei Hadas*", the illustrious deceased one was given the title of "Reb Zvi Aryje Ha'Cohen, known as Henryk Markusfeld".

(Both Henryk Markusfeld z"l and the leaders of the important institutions he had created did not think that, twenty years after his death, his great social and private legacy would be torn from Jewish hands, together with their lives, and that his good deeds would only be immortalised in the Memorial Book of his Częstochowa, for which he dedicated his whole life).

May his memory be blessed forever!